

The Yoga Tracts

Y O G A  
PHYSICAL EDUCATION



SMT SITADEVI IN STHITA PRARTHANASANA OR THE PRAYER POSE IN RELAXED STANDING ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE CORRECT AND NORMAL POSTURE.

# Y O G A

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

(FOR WOMEN)

BY

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TO  
MY LOVING MOTHER

## THE YOGA TRACTS

**THESE** are concise popular manuals on the selected aspects of Yoga Culture and Science, specially adapted to the understanding and need of both the Eastern and Western readers of either sex

Strictly based upon the synthetic, vital and imperative conclusions of the ancient yoga texts and traditions, besides being presented in the light of modern sciences, they are thus meant to serve as the reliable practical guides to the earnest students of Yoga

All important academic and scientific statements are essentially founded upon the data available in the standard texts of this Institute—the **SCIENTIFIC YOGA SERIES** That they lend to further researches is self-evident.

*Editor*

# **The CRYPT OF CIVILIZATION**

**1940 A.D. to 8113 A.D.**

**FOR** the world of the future, the official publications of The Yoga Institute, including the previous edition of this work, have been micro-filmed and sealed in the archives of the Crypt of Civilization—"the greatest historical project in the world today"—which is to remain inviolate until the year 8113 A.D

These works have been "selected by a committee of experts as the world's most authentic sources of knowledge contained in books", and so preserved for 6000 years hence by the Oglethorpe University of America through their remarkable scientific project of the Crypt.

The Yoga Institute not only pioneered the scientific Yoga renaissance over a quarter of a century ago, but also serves as the guiding international link between the ancient scientific Yoga culture and the generations of this future.

*Publishers*

### THIRD EDITION

THE blessings of good health are, indeed, many and universal, biology further asserts that they apply uniformly to both man and woman. What is more, hygiene is recognized as the essential biological factor of good health, and, to achieve and maintain this good health, systematic physical education forms an important part of any scheme of hygiene. In India—or, for that matter, in any parts of the civilized world—5000 years ago, the first to recognize the virtues of hygiene and, thus, of physical education for good health were the ancient yogins.

Thanks to the pioneer activities of The Yoga Institutes in India and abroad, for over a quarter of a century, the secret and obsolete physical training of Yoga has now been revived again with a new scientific vigour. In consequence, first because of its inherent merits, and secondly because of the scientific reorientation pioneered by these Institutes in India (1918-1947) and America (1919-22), the widespread popularity of yoga physical education both in the East and the West is as easily understandable as it is justifiable.



### THIRD EDITION

Moreover, the very intimate association of the author with the scientific activities and administration of the Institute extending to over fifteen years is too well-known to all students of Yoga. During these years, hundreds of students and patients have passed under the personal supervision of the author. This cumulative experience of years founded upon clinical and laboratory data has been utilized in this book for the purpose of formulating a special scheme of daily yoga physical exercises most suited to the needs and temperament of the fair sex.

In 1934, the first, rather small, edition of this work made its appearance in response to a very earnest demand for a special treatise on the yoga physical exercises for women strictly based upon the ancient wisdom of the yogins scrutinized in the light of modern scientific progress in physical education.

So far as the author is aware, no other work on the subject written by a woman for women exists. Besides, the notable success of the previous two editions in popularizing the message of Yoga in so far as it concerns the gentle sex has served as a genuine incentive to the presentation of this more comprehensive third edition. The new material available here has

been drawn mainly from the chapter dealing with Yoga in Health and Disease in the author's standard work *Yoga for Woman*—a volume of the Scientific Yoga Series

In scientific Yoga, the place of physical education is very definite. Since its technique has been based upon the physiopsychic needs of Man, its application has remained universal at all times. The most relevant is the fact that, even after thousands of years, this ancient technique still reveals a relatively superior and more rational system of physical education. The very few posture exercises commended herein merely serve as a practical introduction and an aid to the greater plumbing of the unfathomable depths of yoga science.

The course of rhythmic exercises for women herein set forth consists of certain yoga postures and their dynamic varieties which have been found to be of special hygienic value particularly to women. Essentially, because of the many difficulties met with in the manipulation of some of the original static poses the introduction of these dynamic variants has become necessary. Nothing much, however, has been detracted from their special advantages either (1) as

a preparatory medium to the study of *asanas*, or (ii) as a daily scheme of simple physical training.

Among the distinctive features of this harmonic system may be mentioned: (i) the absolutely non-violent characteristic and perspective affecting not only the body but also the mind, (ii) the maximum physiologic benefit with the minimum waste of energy and without any fatigue, (iii) the endowment of a relatively higher vital index due exclusively to the incorporation of the Yogendra rhythm, (iv) the additional corrective and therapeutic virtues, (v) the cumulative affect on character, behaviour and personality, and (vi) through such good health of both the body and the mind, its vital contribution to the achievement of the ultimate realization of Self.

The rationale of such system of yoga posture-exercises has been very ably presented in another volume of this series in precise scientific terms and, therefore, needs no repetition. What is significant, however, is the fact that, in striking contrast to all other systems of physical gymnastics, this course of daily yoga postural exercises has been found to be ideally suited to those who aspire to pure sedate health for nobler purposes of life rather than to the perpetua-

tion or enlargement of animality so explicit in robust muscular physique

In addition, this daily course of physical education has been so arranged that each part of the body is enabled to receive proper and sufficient exercise without involving strain or monotony. In the beginning, all the movements are to be practised lightly with a view to giving the muscles the requisite time for accommodation. As a systematic scheme of physical training, girls over the age of ten years by starting with one movement of each exercise once a day can complete the course, step by step, some time before they reach their fifteenth year. It may then be continued more or less regularly as a daily hygienic duty till the infirmity of old age—barring periods of ill health, menstruation and advanced pregnancy.

Demonstrably, the cultural affects of these yoga physical exercises are many but, since this manual is prepared strictly on a physiologic basis, any reference to them has been avoided on purpose. Consequently, the central objective in the presentation of this volume is to supply the scientific foundation of physical education for women upon which the prevention of and immunity against disease, the maintenance of good

health, longevity and, above all, the mental sanity and psychic purity must rest. Exact knowledge—at all stages of discussion—has taken the place of fads, fancies and prejudices both in respect of Yoga and physical culture.

The adaptation of a popular instead of a textbook style is necessitated by a much wider demand and use of this work at home than at the schools, colleges or universities. But, as a pure and simple physical education alone, these posture-exercises themselves have the merit of composing both the individual and the mass requirements of the modern age with uniform success—no matter whether they are followed at home or even applied through the media of the educational institutions of any country.

*June, 1945 \**

SITADEVI

\* Although the MS of this edition was ready by the middle of 1945 it could not be printed earlier than now due to many difficulties. Since the original MS was prepared on the basis of diacritical marks for Sanskrit words and since the press at which this is printed has no accent types, we have been obliged to submit to this discrepancy

*Publishers*

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## CHAPTER I

### WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

PROBLEM OF GOOD HEALTH — NEED OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR WOMEN — ADVANTAGES OF YOGA PHYSICAL CULTURE — CARE OF THE BODY

#### PROBLEM OF GOOD HEALTH

IN THEORY, the problem of good health is supposed to present no difficulties. But, in actual practice—notwithstanding the fact that there are only a very few simple rules of good health—due to the too many unnatural conditions imposed on an individual under modern living, how to keep healthy still remains a paradox. Not unreasonably, therefore, does scientific Yoga argue ‘How can one, who does not know the very care of his own body, hope to achieve success in Yoga?’”

(a) *Causes of Ill Health* In order to appreciate the problem of good health, one must first be appraised of the causes and consequences of ill health. It is a scientific fact that hereditary weakness transmitted individually or racially through peculiar physiologic susceptibilities, the unsanitary environments and unfavourable psychologic

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

circumstances contribute to ill health when no efforts are made to improve them. But, the real cause of ill health for which every individual should be personally held responsible is, according to Yoga, the neglect and ignorance of the most elementary laws of hygiene.

Yoga asserts that just as morality is the divine birth-right of Man so also is good health, because it is as natural to be spiritual, moral and healthy as to be born. That human ignorance and errors contribute mainly to all psychic turbulence, immorality and ill health is manifest. Regarded from this point of view, each one is personally responsible for one's own shortcomings in these respects.

Pyle is perfectly justified in stating that "Persons who treat their body as they please and transgress rules of personal hygiene of which they should have a definite understanding are physical sinners, and they are not only committing a crime against themselves but often against their dependents and future generations." In the case of women, however, the genetic, social and moral responsibilities are even greater than those of men since on their own health and well-being depends the physical, the mental and the psychic equipment of the future citizens of this world—to an extent which, perhaps, they themselves do not at first realize.

The clinical observations at The Yoga Institutes covering a period of over a quarter of a century indicate emphatically that disharmony in the various planes of

## PROBLEM OF GOOD HEALTH

consciousness and between the various organs of the body and the mind, either by themselves or interchangeably, progressively leads to ill health which in the early stages remains unnoticed. Commenting on the effects of such disharmony, Shri Yogendra observes "It is absolutely wrong to suppose that casual or non-too-serious illness overcome by treatment leaves no evil effects behind. On the contrary, it has been found that the so-called light illness certainly does impair the growth, harmony and normal functions of the internal organs by causing mal-adjustments in the natural tissue-cells which undergo changes during illness, and very often reduces, to some extent, the potential power of resistance against disease. A minor ailment, thus, not only keeps the door open but may even pave the way for a major trouble-in-waiting. Every jerk of disharmony, every little sign of ill health, every trifle deviation from the normal rhythm of healthful living on the various planes of consciousness, even though it may not show any immediate evil effect, does not fail to leave a permanent mark upon one's health on the debit side. Such little acts and feelings of disharmony, besides producing ill health, deduct more from the years of life and complete living than anything else and, to a great extent, make life a failure and a burden instead of a benefaction and pleasure."

Physiologically, ill health may be attributed to defective nutrition and elimination. Defective nutrition may again be attributed to improper nutrients and disharmony

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

between the various organs of digestion and the other vital functions of the body. Inadequate elimination is just another name of disharmony between the various organs of elimination which tends to ill health through the production of bacterial toxins.

(b) *Consequences of Ill Health* Woman's health, as woman herself, has been neglected so long that, if we continue to neglect it still further, the consequences to the individual and the society are bound to show themselves very badly, sooner than later. This statement is based on our clinical experience and is reiterated solely with a view to educating the young girls about their biologic responsibilities. This has become necessary ostensibly because there seems to be a general growing impression among a large section of womenfolk in the cities and elsewhere to attach preferential and exaggerated importance to the acquisition of objective, mental and mechanized education and refinement—fallaciously called culture—even at the risk of jeopardizing their own physical well-being.

Criticising such ill-conceived tendency in modern women, Stockham observes "We find in women of superior education and marked intelligence an exaggerated development of the emotional nature and a corresponding deterioration of physical powers. Nervousness, debility and suffering is perhaps the common lot of most of them. Not one in a hundred has health and strength to pursue any chosen study, and what is vastly worse, most are unfitted for the duties and perils of maternity."



## CONSEQUENCES OF ILL HEALTH

Moreover, the imposition of unnatural living under modern conditions of stress and strain—whether due to economic, political, social, sanitary or similar other exigencies—by directly affecting the health of individuals disturbs also the home and the society. Such unnatural conditions of living which are universal, chronic and uniform in many respects require, however, a wholesale change in the existing social order to minimize the causes and consequences of ill health.

Added to the above, the wide demand for domestic and social duties and services—which are looked upon as a part of her life—makes woman lose sight of the fact that, by neglecting her own health, she actually reduces both the efficiency and chances of such services as she loves to render. Just think, what example of enthusiasm about education and culture—devoid of good health—can the refined but healthless intellectuals carry to their so-called inferior and less fortunate members of the society? No wonder, therefore, that the latter prefer good health and robust living to the tall claims of education and culture, especially coming from those who themselves suffer from poor health.

With regard to such psychological conditioning of the fair sex, what really is at fault is not the overestimation of mental education or culture but the underestimation of the virtues of good health. This, however, can be easily remedied by making good health the prerequisite to any

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

education and similar other pursuits of life. In this connection, it may be pointed out for the benefit of all modern educationalists that, strangely but fortunately enough, thousands of years ago, Yoga had, in fact, recognized and — what is more vital — consistently adopted this very sane attitude towards good health for solving not only the physical but even the metaphysical problems of life. For Yoga firmly believes that any attempt at moral discipline, mental education, sublimation or psychic elevation is doomed to failure unless and until good health is made the foundation of all such endeavours.

(c) *Virtues of Good Health* In consequence, the value of Yoga to woman does not rest only on its appeal to universal and scientific moral activism but on many other equally urgent issues so vital to ideal womanhood. Thus, for maintaining the day-to-day good health, there is more in Yoga than meets the eye. The science of Yoga has a special cultural section exclusively devoted to physical education embodying *inter alia* personal and general hygiene, physical training, preventive measures and therapeutics. These, according to Yoga, contribute to good health which, in turn, provides for (i) freedom from disease, (ii) maximum efficiency, (iii) character and personality, (iv) beauty of radiant health, (v) exuberant and joyous living, (vi) moral, mental and psychic stamina and elevation, and, above all, (vii) the most-prized among all human physical objectives — longevity. That each one

## VIRTUES OF GOOD HEALTH

of these natural gifts is worthy of ideal womanhood cannot be gainsaid, and hence any knowledge that contributes to all these priceless endowments—in a synthetic whole—deserves the closest and most immediate attention of every woman

In this respect, what is even more relevant, particularly in the case of a woman, is the fact that the responsibilities of motherhood—representing the fondest but equally most anxious period of a woman's life—naturally transform the problem of good health to one of urgency and consecration. Good health, thus, gains an added significance with the approach of motherhood. It is, therefore, the duty of every woman to safeguard her health against those ailments to which as a woman she is peculiarly liable.

Again, from the point of view of social service, an earnest plea may be addressed to those who intend taking up or are actually engaged in any humanitarian work, that they build up a sound system of health for themselves in order to be successful in their mission. This will not merely serve as an example to others but will also lighten the burden so far as the work itself is concerned. It is a matter of common experience that to cheer the hearts with no cheer requires an abundance of it in those who determine to carry it. Good cheer virtually means self-confidence, inner happiness and a reserve of vitality, and, be sure, that vitality emanates only from good health—both physical and mental.

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In addition, strength of character (*yogacara*), which Yoga has always placed higher than intelligence (*jnana*), is also a potential source of vitality and *vice versa*, but strength of even a moderate degree comes only from good health and requires a certain amount of moral and spiritual stamina. Lack of such strength means lack of purpose, lack of the essentials for success, and hence the need to build up good health.

Furthermore, the spirit of self-effacement in the service of others emotionally natural to womanhood often leads to poor health among the gentle sex. The remedy lies not in destroying that noble spirit of living for others, but in enriching its usefulness through personal good health. According to Yoga, there are certain duties which one owes to oneself and those concerning health are regarded as both primal and sacred. What is really significant is the fact that, with Yoga, such sacredness of the body is not merely a figure of speech or a profession, on the contrary, personal hygiene, physical education and therapeutics constitute an important part of—what may be termed—the daily spiritual duties.

And finally, while considering good health, the most obvious must not be overlooked, it is the feminine love of beauty. By nature, the gentle sex has marked affinity and appreciation of beauty, and this aesthetic taste has to be reckoned with while selecting specified measures for good health. Any system of health education—irrespective of the fact whether it belongs to the modern physical culture

## NEED OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR WOMAN

or Yoga—which takes away from a woman the grace and charm of womanhood is likely to have very little appeal to the modern women

Laboratory and clinical experience at the Institute and the experiments at other centres have proved more or less conclusively that the yoga physical culture since it is, in effect, non-violent and non-fatiguing is pre-eminently suited to woman—not to speak of the direct reactions it has upon the vital organs of the body and the sedate planes of consciousness. Thus, it adds elegance to her body beautiful—in the true sense of the word—for real beauty does not consist in the mere physical appearance but in the perfect health, symmetry and harmony of both the body and the mind

### NEED OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION FOR WOMAN

2 Our body needs daily care, if good health is to be maintained. Modern environments in all spheres of life have made this doubly imperative because bodily illness is becoming common while good health is rare

(a) *Feminine Disadvantages* Overactivity and inactivity, even while they appear quite contrary to each other, are in fact the two modern curses of mechanical civilization, and to add to her biologic susceptibilities, especially in countries with orthodox ideas, woman suffers most tragically from these extremes. For example, among the poor, woman is overworked and needs more rest than physical education, besides better facilities of sanitation,

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

hygiene, social amenities and other auxiliary means to healthful living, while among the middle and the well-to-do classes, usually the educated — blessed with fair circumstances — she suffers from inactivity and superfluity

In all that concerns health, the modern educated woman labours under many physiological and psychological disadvantages. First, to begin with, she has a relatively smaller lung capacity, and greater organic responsibilities particularly during pregnancy and motherhood. Secondly, she is taught to value her education more highly than her health. Thirdly, with her progress in education, she learns to regard physical work as degrading and believes that mental pursuits reflect refinement and culture. Fourthly, false notions of beauty and social etiquette make her more or less unnatural and hyper-sensitive. Fifthly, the strain of modern living adds greatly to the progressively increasing demand on her nervous system. Thus, overactivity, inactivity, indifference, artifices of unnatural restraints, de-function of rightful expressions and of healthy emotions, neglect of calls of Nature when felt, added to nervous irritation and strain of mechanical and ill-advised life — all the elements of disharmony and the jarring unnaturalness — make good health virtually impossible for her.

(b) *Prejudice against Physical Education* The general notion that any type of physical exercise tends to make a woman coarse, unsexes her, makes her self-assertive and *hybridistic is ill-founded and not based on any scientific*

## PREJUDICE AGAINST PHYSICAL EDUCATION

data In fact, it all depends upon the course of exercises selected

Whatever the arguments, a systematic course of non-violent and non-fatiguing physical education is now universally acknowledged as an essential factor for the preservation of good health either for man or woman. It is invariably recommended by the physicians who in their daily practice have occasion to witness the melancholy effects of those habits of inaction which so generally prevail among the female portion of society, more especially in large towns and cities.

When we take into account the high rate of mortality among the young women, the very poor health of the average school girl and the too frequent illness among the educated women, we realize the true import of physical education for the fair sex. The very recent experiments on the physiology of athletics by McKenzie, Hill and others leave no doubt that the system of non-fatiguing exercises is the one most suited to the feminine need. Certain it is that, when physical education for women becomes better known, the scientific value of yoga physical culture for woman as a means to healthy womanhood will be soon recognized.

### ADVANTAGES OF YOGA PHYSICAL CULTURE

3 Even as early as B.C. 3000, the first to recognize the virtues of physical culture not merely as an aid to good health but as the essential requisite to moral, mental and

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

psychic elevation were the scientific yogins—the ancient pioneers of personal and general hygiene, sanitation, physical education, preventive medicine and natural therapy.

It stands to reason, however, that the mere antiquity of Yoga or its physical culture cannot *per se* form the basis of recommendation for its public adoption unless and until it is also proved, in the light of our modern sciences, that it is the best among all available systems of physical education. The limited scope of this work precludes any elaborate discussion of the relative merits of the various systems—which certainly is being undertaken in other volumes of this series. What at best, therefore, could be done for the purpose of this treatise is to point out some of the outstanding advantages of Yoga in health and disease—especially in relation to the specific needs of a woman.

(a) *Fundamental Objectives* Abstract and applied metaphysics credit Yoga with many transcendental ideals and achievements. These aside, even if science were to be accepted as a proof positive, the yoga physical culture alone is able to supply unlimited evidence of its relative superiority. To explain briefly, the fundamental objectives of the yoga physical culture are (i) the acquisition of good health, after eliminating diseases—should there be any, (ii) the maintenance and enhancement of physical well-being, after the natural harmony between the various organs has been once again re-established, (iii) the cultivation of immunity against disease, (iv) the acquisition



## ADVANTAGES OF YOGA PHYSICAL CULTURE

of gradual control over both the voluntary and involuntary functions of the body, (v) the utilization of such control to strengthening the moral, mental and spiritual purposes and achievements of life, and (vi) with the aid of all these, to defer old age and death till the Ultimate Reality is seen face to face

(b) *Characteristic Differences* About the application and specific advantages of yogatherapeutics for the prevention or elimination of many common and chronic diseases, innumerable references have been made in the volumes of the Scientific Yoga Series. For the present, suffice it to say that yoga physical culture enjoys many distinct advantages over other systems of physical education. These characteristic differences may be summed up as follows —

1. It is based on harmonic non-violent and non-fatiguing exercises. It, thus, avoids the tragic folly of muscle-cult and body-building which cannot but lead to ungainly body with overdeveloped or hard muscles obscuring the delicate feminine beauty of figure, touch and symmetry.

In fact, it is on account of this glaring defect—as witness—of many systems of physical education that not a few intelligent women refrain from certain forms of physical exercise because of the fear that they may acquire bulky and firmer development. And, while it is true that the fair sex does not develop bulging muscles—for a woman's muscle does not develop like that of the sterner sex—the fact remains that, with all systems of physical education involving repeated movements there exists the

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danger of bulk through muscular overdevelopment to the disadvantage of the internal organs. This added bulk—because it is a well-known physiological fact that there are fewer fatty globules in the tissues of a man than in a woman—thus places an extra strain upon the disproportionately underdeveloped internal organs, and, in later years, reduces the chances for longevity.

Significantly enough, modern scientists who have specialized in this branch of knowledge have unanimously and openly debunked the cult of Amazon ideals, and assert, as did the yogins five thousand years ago, that the specialization of muscular development is not only not necessary but even harmful to the maintenance of natural good health.

- ii The yoga physical exercises both static and dynamic differ fundamentally from the bare and rough muscular gymnastics or even sports and games for the very simple reason that the former contribute to greater direct and beneficial physiologic reactions than is otherwise possible through any technique of modern systems of physical culture. This becomes even more evident when the corresponding indices of energy expenditure are closely compared.
- iii Besides the care of the external organs, the natural and normal cleanliness and development of the internal organs, which could not be achieved through other systems, is made possible through such technique as is secretly imparted only by the yoga physical culture.
- iv Moreover, the scheme of yoga physical education is en-

## SCIENTIFIC CHARACTERISTICS

tirely free from the evil of compromise—the evident disregard of individual needs, capabilities and inbeing—common to all systems of physical training predominantly conceived for strength and violence or for purposes of mass and military training. On the contrary, yoga physical education is—as should become any exact science—guided by and adapted to the specific physiological and psychological requirements of each and every individual.

- v The yoga practices through neuromuscular motility contribute directly more to the internal rather than to the external health and development of the body thereby gradually leading to education, co-ordination, culture and control mainly of the nervous system which is now regarded by all leading scientists as of utmost importance not only for one's physical well-being but also for the mental, the moral and the psychic stamina.
- vi The last but not the least important of all such advantages, however, is the very and ultimate objective of yoga physical education. In the first place, it transcends the mere perpetuation or enlargement of animal elements encouraged by and sought through various systems with modern tendencies in physical culture. Thus, indeed, is in sharp contrast to that emphasis on muscular strength inspired by the Sadistic element so obvious in vigorous physical training, gymnastics, sports, athletics and acrobatism. In the second place, the yoga health, hygiene and physical education, on the whole, is intended for and actually supplements—through its peculiar contribution to exuberant and sedate health—the individual effort at

## WOMAN'S HEALTH AND YOGA

moral, mental and psychic elevation culminating into sublime Self-realization

### CARE OF THE BODY

4 Broadly speaking, yoga physical education is two-fold, having as its objectives (i) care, development and control of the external body, and (ii) care, development and control of the internal organs. The former includes postural training and personal hygiene, while the latter consists of varied intricate processes directly effecting the health, development and control of the internal organs.

Of these, the yoga postural training, while, in the main, subordinated to the highest spiritual objective, is sufficiently exhaustive even as a comprehensive scheme of physical exercises. Because of their marked physiological reactions with the minimum waste of energy and other similar hygienic benefits, the yoga postures offer an unique system of physical training to a woman.

What is highly important, however, is the right selection of the most hygienic postures, either static or dynamic (in their variations), from the many so that they may be systematized into a harmonious course of daily exercises physiologically and otherwise most suited to the peculiar needs of a woman.

With regard to the intricate yoga processes, even while these are primarily intended to purify the nervous system (*nadīśuddhi*), they directly affect also the health, develop-

## CARE OF THE BODY

ment and control of almost all the internal organs. Of these, the elementary practices have been explained in the official publications of the Institute, while the more advanced and complicated require to be studied under the personal guidance of a scientific yogin. Where such guidance is not available, it is safer to defer the study than to risk an injury through misguided practice. This does not mean that the higher yoga practices are injurious, but it certainly means that any scientific study undertaken without authorized direction—especially when it happens to be an experiment on one's own person—is likely to prove fruitless or even injurious.

## CHAPTER II

### CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

RELATION OF PROPER CARRIAGE TO HEALTH — PRARTHANASANA IN RELAXED STANDING — EKAPADASANA — PADMASANA.

#### RELATION OF PROPER CARRIAGE TO HEALTH

PRACTICAL TRAINING in physiological (*ghatasya*) Yoga rightly begins with the study of prayer and meditative poses (*asana*) which, in scientific terminology, may be interpreted as the corrective gymnastics. It may also be observed in due fairness to the ancient teachers of scientific Yoga that they realized then as do our modern scientists now that the proper carriage of the body is essential to health of both the body and the mind. For it not only contributes to a dignified appearance but considerably helps to maintain also the muscular tonus of the whole system.

One of the most common causes of sluggishness and the disturbances of the digestive organs is the faulty carriage of the body, particularly above the waist zone involving the spinal and the abdominal muscles. In the large majority of women, the ugly and ungainly appearance may be definitely attributed to defective postures. Practically,

## PROPER CARRIAGE AND HEALTH

all women stand in an improper attitude—a fact of which they seem to be sadly ignorant To be statistically precise, it is no exaggeration to say that more than 50 per cent of all civilized women, in all classes of life, are victims to faulty postures and have, as a consequence, developed the condition now diagnosed as enteroptosis This means that the stomach, the intestines, very often the kidneys, even the liver and the pelvic organs are dragged downward and so remain permanently out of their proper anatomical positions But, these defects have become very common, and the contours of the body so well-developed in the early life that they are largely overlooked and are argued to be natural and even beautiful by the mass of womankind

It is a known physiological fact that an improper carriage retards the splanchnic circulation of the large blood vessels It has, thus, been observed by Mitchell that "In an habitual slouching posture, the blood of the abdomen tends to stagnate in the liver and the splanchnic circulation, causing a feeling of despondency and mental confusion, headache, coldness of the hands and feet, chronic fatigue or neurasthenia, and often constipation "

According to the clinical observations at the Institute, various disorders also of the digestive and pelvic organs and, at times, even those (functional varieties) of the heart and lungs have been traced directly to incorrect posture habits Many cases could be cited to show how persons suffering for years from the above symptoms have been

## CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

cured after a few weeks of training in the right posture through corrective exercises .

The hygienic influence of proper carriage on health should, therefore, be regarded as of primary importance. As such, the yoga corrective prayer and meditative poses may be studied with advantage not merely for correcting postural defects and, thus, encouraging co-ordination and balance but also for the mental poise and spiritual elevation consequent upon such a psychophysical training.

Pyle contends that an incorrect posture reduces the normal standard of efficiency not only of the body but also of the mind and spirit. This happens to be so because of the fact that the three parts of Man are so dependent, each upon the other, that any influence on one must affect the whole.

The proper poise of the body, when erect, is best appreciated by studying the graceful curves it imparts to the figure and the feeling of self-confidence and exaltation which follows it. Objectively, a correct posture is attractive from an aesthetic point of view for it embodies in beauty the idea of triumph and self-respect. On the contrary, the drooped and slouching position is not only ugly and unhealthy but also unbecoming and derogatory reflecting even — at a glance — a more degenerated mental attitude.

### PRARTHANASANA IN RELAXED STANDING

2 It is quite evident that the influence of proper carriage on health of both the body and the mind was fully



## PRARTHANASANA IN RELAXED STANDING

recognized by the ancient yogins. Accordingly, the central objective of posture in Yoga has been to secure physical ease and poise (Patanjali). For this, an erect posture—more particularly of the upper part of the body—is recommended with a view to maintaining free spinal circulation during periods of prolonged sitting and concentration.

The first lesson in yoga postures therefore, begins with the study of simple prayer poses in standing. Modern interpretations and scientific corroborations show many educative and corrective or therapeutic advantages even of these simple poses. Whether the ancient masters of Yoga attached any special significance to them as an independent scheme of physical culture or not is immaterial for that certainly does not deprive them of the inherent physiologic merits which they possess. In effect, besides being excellent poses for prayer and meditation, many of them have also been found to be very useful for routine practice both as educative and preventive measures.

✓Of these, the one most easy of practice to begin with is the posture known as (*sthita*) *prarthanasana* or the prayer-pose in relaxed standing. The purpose, as previously explained, is to gain steadiness through gradual control over the voluntary muscular movements. This prayer-pose, thus, serves a threefold purpose by (i) offering through steadiness the best physical attitude for prayer in standing, (ii) teaching normal posture in standing through co-ordination of skeleton muscles, and (iii) correcting postural defects by aiding proper carriage.

## CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

While standing, hold the body as tall as possible *without* actually rising on the toes. Keep the feet together and place all the weight upon the balls of the parallel feet. Throw the head and chest well up, the shoulder blades flat upon the back, the abdominal muscles deflated at their lower part—but not necessarily drawn inwards—and fuller just below the ribs, the pelvis tilted at such an angle as to prevent any exaggeration of the lumbar curve, the knees straight but not stiff, the legs together touching each other (above the knees) and the hands folded and brought over the sternum. Refer to FIG 1 (title page). Avoid tension, relax the mind and fix the eyes on any object before you.

In this position, the thorax is full and round, the diaphragm is high, the abdomen is given its greatest length, thus, holding the stomach and the intestinal viscera in place and the pelvic organs remaining free from any undue pressure from above. There is partial relaxation of the muscles, no tension noticeable, and no one part of the body is either overworked or strained. With the arms relaxed and let down at their respective sides—as an alternative variant for proper carriage—it offers the most ideal position for standing. Tunstall Taylor, Pyle and other modern authorities on physical education unanimously regard such a position as the most normal and correct posture in relaxed standing.

Maintain this position for about one minute *normal* breathing being followed throughout the pose. Keep your



FIG 2

A SIDE VIEW OF STHITA PRARTHANASANA  
SHOWING THE RIGHT METHOD FOR TEST  
ING ROMBERG'S SWAYING POSITION



FIG 3

EKAPADASANA OR THE ONE LEG  
POSE WITH THE SYMBOL OF  
PRAYER TO INITIATE TRAINING  
IN NEUROMUSCULAR BALANCE  
AND CO ORDINATION

## ROMBERG'S POSITION TEST

mind free — even though in Yoga it has to be concentrated on a given object — by refusing to think, and observe emphatic silence ]

(a) *Romberg's Position Test* Now, turn laterally, either side, parallel to any vertical object, viz., a wall or a pillar, and see if there is any swaying either forward, backward or sideways. If there is any tendency to swaying, you may safely take it as an indication of nervous disturbance which has to be checked soon.

*Prarthanasana* may be further applied for hygienic reasons with advantage to Romberg's swaying position for correcting errors should there be any. For this test, the student may draw dark heavy straight lines either on a wall, a board, or a pillar (or on any similar objects available and found convenient), as tall as herself — corresponding with this posture — just above the ankles, behind the back and intercepted at the top by a parallel line above the plane of the head. For particulars, a reference may be made to FIG 2.

When practised opposite a mirror, the swaying movements could be clearly and easily studied. During the period of test and correction, however, keep the eyes half-shut allowing just enough vision for observation, and concentrate your mind on the whole body — particularly above the waist. Keep unmoved as you would during the actual exposure for photograph before a camera. But, no sooner any tendency for swaying is noticed than the same must be

## CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

checked by the will power; and, sustained effort to maintain the original pose may be continued from two to three minutes Throughout the pose, follow normal breathing It is best practised in the morning (if necessary in the evening) and may be followed every day till complete control has been secured — then, optionally, once a week In due course, it leads to the cultivation of neuromuscular co-ordination and balance so essential to postural steadiness

### EKAPADASANA

3 Retain the same position as in FIG 1 Now, with the aid of your hands, after bending down, lift one leg and raise it up till it reaches the thigh Maintain your balance and stand on the other leg If you are afraid of falling down, however, stand and practise near a wall or take aid of a window sill, a pillar or anything available Then, after sufficient steadiness on one leg having been secured, adjust the other by pressing the heel of the raised leg tightly against the opposite groin, and the sole of the feet against the opposite thigh For technical details, refer to FIG 3

Steadiness — really, nerve control and co-ordination between muscular and nervous systems — which is one of the objectives of yoga physical education has to be gained by slow degrees, and, in the early stages, it may become necessary to take aid of an individual or an object, for the purpose of holding to preserve the balance Later on, attempts may be made to leave off any support and also to

## EKAPADASANA

arrange the hands as in the prayer-pose Use the legs alternately This posture is known as *ekapadasana* or the one-leg-pose

In the beginning, it may not be found quite easy to maintain this position for more than a few seconds, but this may be gradually increased to two or three minutes During the posture, normal breathing is indicated It may be practised both in the morning and in the evening for a period of from one to two minutes |

Besides exercising and alternately relaxing the muscles of the leg and cultivating certain physical characteristics such as neuromuscular co-ordination, balance, endurance and alertness, this posture also helps to gain nerve control The demand on the nervous system is, of course, moderate when the same is practised somewhat indifferently, but, if the body were to be held erect with the chest thrown forward and the legs at right angle to each other, the demand for neuromuscular co-ordination to maintain equilibrium would be considerably increased.

Whenever swaying is experienced, however, during this posture, the best way to avoid it is to concentrate your mind on each of your movements, i e, to become *thoroughly* conscious of even the most insignificant variations in steadiness with a view to securing control over all unwanted movements Along with the other measures recommended, when followed carefully, this posture facilitates nerve control in the course of a few months

# CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

## PADMASANA

4 While speaking of the corrective prayer poses, the traditional meditative posture *padmasana* or the lotus-pose may be regarded as an essential exercise in postural training both for the purpose of yoga meditation as also for preserving normal elasticity of the muscles connected with the pelvis and the lower extremities

Especially with those who are not accustomed to sit in an Oriental fashion, such stiffness of the lower parts of the body as prevents natural flexibility happens to be quite marked. This may be attributed to their having grown up with the habit of using a chair, and this loss of suppleness, from the yoga physical education point of view, has to be reclaimed. To them, in the initial stages, the lotus pose may prove somewhat difficult of practice, but this should be overcome with the aid of massage, regularity and steadfastness in endurance. What has to be remembered, however, is to avoid all undue strain and temptation to master it by violent jerks or forceful flexions of the lower joints.

Preliminaries to the daily yoga physical exercises have been discussed in another volume of this series and may be adhered to faithfully for ensuring the best result. As a rule, these posture-exercises should be performed on an empty stomach, alternatively, an hour before or after food. Now, that the sitting and lying-down yoga exercises are being treated, it is imperative that the use of a bare floor be avoided. Always provide a mat (6 × 3 feet) of *kusa* or



## PADMASANA

other grass, a woollen carpet, or a well-tanned hide—preferably of a deer or a tiger. A clean sheet should then be spread over any one of these as available, and the same be washed daily after each use

To begin with the lotus-pose, sit on the floor (of course, a mat or a rug prepared as previously stated) with your legs fully stretched out. First bend the right leg in the knee-joint slowly and tactfully, then fold it upon itself and with the aid of the hands place the right heel at the root of the left thigh in such a way that the right foot with its sole turned upwards fully stretches over the left groin. In like manner, bend the left leg at the knee-joint and folding it upon itself, place, with the aid of the hands, the left heel over the root of the right thigh in such a way that the ankles cross each other, the heel-ends touch closely, and the left foot with its upturned sole lies fully stretched over the right groin. Keep the knees pressed to the ground, tighten the feet against the thighs, and press the heels firmly against the upper front margin of the pubic bone slightly above the sex organs. This is termed semi-lotus pose or *ardha-padmasana*

To complete this pose, however, hold the body erect, the neck straight and the chest thrown forward. It is desirable to keep the abdomen moderately drawn inwards and the eyes fixed on any object in the front, optionally, they may even be closed. Spread the left hand with its back touching the two heels, the palm turned upward, over-

## CORRECTIVE PRAYER POSES

*lapping on this, place the right hand in the like manner. See FIG 4* Tradition associates this classic lotus pose with the symbol of Peace, and is, therefore, much favoured by the yogins

It may be pointed out, with reference to its technique, that while the texts recommend the use of the right leg first, the posture may be secured even with the left leg first, as may be found convenient. It has been observed, during physical training at the Institute, that in the majority of cases, especially in the case of women, it is relatively easier to secure *padmasana* by folding the left leg first and then placing the right over it than otherwise. The reverse has proved very difficult at times for the simple reason that the knees would not keep to the ground. To the students of yoga physical education, however, the *alternate use of the legs* is strongly commended so that complete mastery over each side may be secured.

According to the clinical and laboratory experience at the Institute, besides being a meditative posture, *padmasana* has many corrective and cultural advantages. It is readily seen that this posture offers either extension, flexion or relaxation to almost all the important muscles, ligaments and tendons of the lower extremities. It further induces increased blood circulation in the abdominogenital region through interference at some stages, by hastening the return at others and especially by drawing more supply of blood from the bifurcation of the abdominal aorta than what is possible under any normal posture. Thus, the restraint



## PADMASANA

caused in the general circulation by the pressure of the heels provides for an increased supply of blood to the sex organs and also, incidentally, helps to tone the various nerve centres located in the pelvic region, viz, the chain of the coccygeal and sacral nerves

Improved respiration follows, as a result of the chest being thrown forward and the abdomen held in normal contour. The internal organs—particularly, the intestinal tract—too derive the benefit of a correct sitting posture through the increased muscle tone and normal intra-abdominal pressure through anterior muscular tonicity and partial contraction

What is obvious is that, during this pose, neither the shoulders could sag forward crowding the chest nor could these both crowd down upon the stomach and other abdominal viscera. This, indeed, is a great physiologic advantage, and the value of this posture both as a corrective and as an osteopathic gymnastics is, thus, manifest. Naturally, therefore, it has been observed by the authorities that, "the yogin who, sitting in the lotus-pose, can regulate his breathing movements is undoubtedly free from certain pathogenetic conditions"

## CHAPTER III

### CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

HEIGHT IN RELATION TO HEALTH — YASTIKASANA — BULK VS SLIMNESS — PARVATASANA — SUPPLENESS AND ELASTICITY — TRIKONASANA AND ITS VARIATION — GARUDASANA

#### HEIGHT IN RELATION TO HEALTH

THE THREE introductory poses for women so far discussed serve the need of corrective postural training in Yoga. This is purposely done with a view to avoiding movements which are likely to involve or demand unusual strain, right in the beginning, upon her delicate constitution. But, the yoga physical exercises do not stop at the mere acquisition of a proper carriage or a correct posture for meditation. It further aims at retaining the slimness, suppleness and elasticity of childhood, thus, helping to maintain that natural harmony between the various parts of the body which is so essential to permanent good health. Especially in the case of those who have partially lost these three vital anatomical-physiological characteristics, the need to reclaim them is, indeed, imperative and, therefore, emphasized by Yoga. Of course, such an effort cannot but include exercises involving a certain amount of struggle

## HEIGHT IN RELATION TO HEALTH

and difficulty in the early stages, particularly to those unaccustomed to any form of physical training

It may be also observed that most of the anatomic essentials to good health, to a very large extent, are dependent on height. Accordingly, the perfect development of the body implies a fully balanced skeleton—with normal height and weight with strength to correspond. That Yoga fully recognized these factors of good health is evident from the general perspective of its physical education.

(a) *Normal Height* Geographical, racial and other considerations preclude establishment of the standard height. What is, nevertheless, true is that normal height—in modest consideration of all relevant factors—has distinct physical advantages, more so, in relation to the proper accommodation of the vital organs within. For example, the stunted figures except in the case of heredity, viz., the pigmies, tell the woeful tale of the crowded internal organs. Of course, men are taller than women, but, every inch of height upto the normal—when followed up with balanced nutrition—adds greatly not only to good health but also to the prolongation of life.

Naturally enough, ideas about what really constitutes the perfect feminine figure vary in various countries at different ages. After taking into consideration such divergent opinions, however, the approximate average height of

## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

a woman now generally agreed upon by the modern authorities is 5' 4 5" Since scientific Yoga favours slimness with joyous health (*vapuh krsatvam vadane prasannata*), it may be safely assumed that the standard normal height was implied by Yoga as an important measure of good health

In addition, with regard to height, while it has been established that much depends upon heredity, it has been amply demonstrated, at the same time, how it is equally possible to increase height upto a certain age with the aid of suitable exercises General medical opinion is that this is possible upto maturity, i.e., the twenty fifth year The clinical data at the Institute, however, indicate also the possibility of an increase in height—really, the stature—upto the age of thirty-seven years, especially by relieving structural congestion of the trunk and, more so, of the spine

(b) *Feminine Structural Disadvantages* According to Tait McKenzie, "At maturity, woman has a relatively longer trunk and shorter legs, less muscular but more adipose tissues about the hips and thighs and a much smaller lung capacity The shoulders are narrower and more sloping, the bones lighter, and the chest much less muscular The centre of gravity in the body is much lower, and all these differences put woman at a distinct disadvantage"

In terms of good health, the relatively smaller lung capacity curtails her power of endurance Thus, it becomes physiologically evident and essential that, in order

## INCREASING HEIGHT

to maintain good health through physical education, she must seek the aid not of any violent or rigorous gymnastics which may tend to waste or strain but take to only such non-violent and non-fatiguing system of physical education as contributes to maximum vital index. When a muscle contracts it squeezes the blood out of its veins and, at the same time, in shortening it widens and allows more blood to flow through the arteries. In fact, three times more blood is supplied to a muscle during exercise than at rest. The merit of any exercise, therefore, mainly depends upon the minimum waste and strain.

It is necessary, in the light of the above, to emphasize that youth must not be allowed to supersede this vital consideration in physical exercise just because no evil effects may be immediately discernible. Especially in the case of woman, this caution should prevail throughout the four epochs of her life, viz., maidenhood, marriage, maternity and menopause. And this exactly is why the simple but most effective postural training advocated by Yoga is peculiarly suited to and meets the special needs of the delicate feminine constitution.

(c) *Increasing Height* As the first preliminary to yoga physical education, those who find that they are below the average height should try to increase the same. In considering the possibility of making one's body taller, the first important fact is that the height depends upon the skeleton, i.e., the growth and condition of the bones. There are really three divisions which determine the complete stature of



## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

an individual, viz, (i) the length of the legs and (ii) the spine, and (iii) the height of the cranium. Usually, great variations in height are chiefly due to the differences in the length of the legs and the spine since the height of the cranium is, more or less, uniform.

Of these two, since the extremities are largely responsible for the increase in height, the need of such constitutional exercise as would allow maximum stretching of the extremities deserves special emphasis and attention because any attempt to improve the stature by other special methods must fail so long as these fundamental requirements are neglected. Any stretching of the body at full length, therefore, is of utmost importance for three distinct purposes: (i) relieving the compression of the cartilages of the spine, (ii) stretching of the skeleton muscles, more particularly of the extremities, and (iii) encouraging freedom to and growth of the lungs and other vital organs.

### YASTIKASANA

2 Some of the dynamic variations of *talasana* or the *palmae*-pose and other yoga postures—harmonized to rhythmic breathing known as Yogendra rhythm pioneered and introduced by Shri Yogendra in modern physical training as early as 1918—supply an excellent course for increasing height. What is indicated as the very first lesson is an all-body stretch which avoids undue strain, and this is more easy in a lying-down position than in standing.



FIG 5  
YASTIKASANA OR THE STICK POSE EVEN THOUGH A LATER DEVELOPMENT IS AN  
EXCELLENT STRETCHING EXERCISE FOR INCREASING HEIGHT

## YASTIKASANA

Lie on your back with the legs and the arms (stretched towards the head) fully extended. Be at ease and somewhat relaxed. Now, inhale for 2 seconds, and, retaining the breath, stretch the body at full length slowly and with care—the toes and the fingers pointing outwards, as if trying to reach something farther from them. Retain this stretch for 4 seconds, and release the tension of the stretch while exhaling. In this respect, it must be always remembered that any attempt at maximum stretching of the body as shown in Fig 5 should be undertaken *only* during the retention of breath and not otherwise. Moreover, it must not exceed the period of from four to six seconds. This full length stretch of the body is called *yastikasana* or the stick-pose because it resembles a stick lying straight on a floor.

The movements, co-ordinated breathing and time in this exercise should be adjusted as follows (i) supine body, extremities out-stretched, inhale, 3 seconds, (ii) maximum body stretch, inspiratory standstill, 6 seconds, and (iii) return to starting position, exhalation, 3 seconds. Repeat five times in one minute.

Primarily, the object of this posture is to facilitate maximum stretching of the body. Such supine movements serve a threefold purpose, viz, (i) to enhance freedom of the body from any harm that may be done through faulty postural habits, (ii) to tense the usually relaxed abdominal and pelvic muscles, and (iii) to offer rest and

## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

relaxation when a non-stretching, relaxed and passive attitude is maintained

Since stretching aids height, *yastikasana* as such serves as an excellent means to increasing one's height without resorting to strenuous measures. It should be practised in the morning for at least one minute, leaving some margin for pause. If necessary, it may even be repeated in the evening. When used exclusively for relaxation, normal rhythmic breathing is indicated without any effort at stretching.

### BULK vs SLIMNESS

3 In addition to height, the scientific idea of feminine beauty and of symmetry may be summed up in one word—slimness. Thus, any overweight either due to muscular bulk or much fat is now regarded as ugly and even unhygienic. Apart from this aesthetic and hygienic outlook, it has also been found that chronic overweight and too much fat tend to functional disorders of the various systems.

According to the clinical observations at the Institute, muscular bulk acquired through rigorous body-building precludes proportionate and healthy development of the internal organs. The virtual monopoly of the blood stream by the muscular system, thus, retards the full development especially of the nervous system and the brain. In the case of accumulation of fat, the same is encouraged by faulty diet and costiveness, notwithstanding the role of the

## BULK vs SLIMNESS

thyroid and the pituitary It has also been observed that the morbid surplus often tends to collect near the usually inactive portions of the body, especially the waist and the hips It then extends to the lower and gradually the upper portion of the abdomen and the breasts The lower extremities and the arms, being in some form of action, are attacked last

As a preventive and remedial measure, therefore, the parts of the body which need the greatest care in a woman are her waist zone and the pelvic region For it is where constipation begins, the fat often accumulates and the faulty postures further tend to loosen the tone of her abdominal muscles and make her look flabby

Besides general hygiene, extreme stretching exercises help to correct faulty elimination by improving the abdominal tonus, the evils of faulty postures are likewise balanced, and, thus, not only the accumulation of fat is prevented but even the reducing of fat is made possible For one thing, extreme stretching causes deep pressure both on the muscular tissues as well as on the organs closely associated For another, any stretching of the body or its parts enables the muscular tissues to either using up a part of or putting into circulation most of the surplus deposits of fat Such movements, further tend to equalize the blood circulation by encouraging the venous flow, promote better co ordination, and tense the usually relaxed abdominal muscles

## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

It is a scientific fact that a certain amount of fat is invariably present in all muscles, and its normal distribution is largely ensured through properly selected stretching exercises. On the contrary, repeated movements so common to modern systems of physical education not only tend to stiffen but even enlarge the muscular fibres. For these very reasons, the yoga postures are the best means to preserving—besides slimness—tonicity, elasticity and normal relationship and functions of the internal organs, without fatigue or violence. In fact, some of the preliminary poses are so simple that they may be practised with advantage even by those who are quite unaccustomed to any form of physical exercise. The discerning woman should, thus, find in yoga posture-training that type of physical education which is most suited to her sex.

### { PARVATASANA

4 For slimness the posture known as *parvatasana* or the mountain pose is another easy technique of stretching, especially for the body above the hips. At the Institute, it has been found most suitable for the beginners as an extremely valuable aid to keeping slim and to correcting minor postural defects of the spine.

Assume the semi lotus pose (see page 49), then slowly raise the hands at full length upward and above the head. Either interlace the fingers or keep the palms pressed against each other. Now stretch upwards, as if trying to reach something above your head. Keep the arms close to

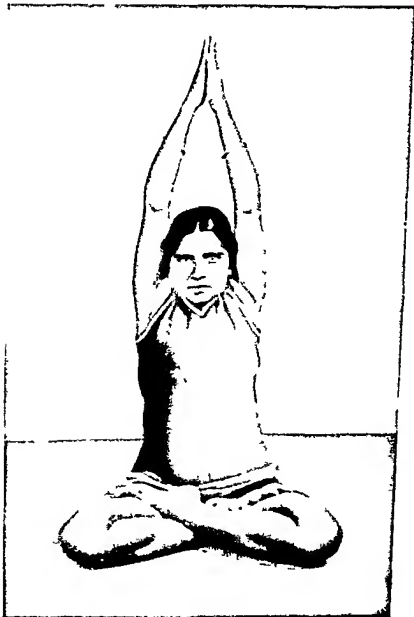


FIG. 6

PARVATASANA OR THE MOUNTAIN POSE PERFORMED IN ARDHA

## PARVATASANA

their respective ears, and the head erect. Straighten your back, pull the abdomen in, and, while inhaling, raise the upper part of your body to its possible height. Avoid bending the arms at the elbows and the hands near the wrists — rather keep them stretched out straight, as shown in Fig 6. Maintain this position during the inspiratory standstill when attempts at maximum stretching are most successful. If possible, keep your eyes fixed on any object before you, and your mind at perfect ease. This arrangement of the posture is known as *parvatasana* because it resembles the appearance of a mountain.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows: (i) raise arms in sitting, inhalation, 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, Fig 6, retention of breath, 6 seconds, and (iii) return to starting position (in sitting), exhalation, 3 seconds. Repeat five times to a minute without pause, with the initial training in five breaths to a minute.

This posture pulls all the abdominal and pelvic muscles, loosens the hips, straightens the muscles of the back, stretches and exercises the usually inactive waist zone and considerably helps to reduce the fatty and flabby abdomen. Also as a corrective posture, it is very valuable because it mechanically holds the body erect, throws the chest forward and keeps the head straight. For those whose abdominal and pelvic tone is relaxed, its practice is specially indicated for improving the natural support of the viscera. It should be followed every day for a period of not less than



## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

one minute, if possible, both in the morning and in the evening \

√The four dynamic variations of the mountain-pose consist in (i) the swaying forward, (ii) the leaning backward, (iii) the bending sideward to the right, and (iv) the bending sideward to the left, during the standstill period of 6 seconds. This means that instead of the perpendicular position during stretching, the same is varied by movements on the four sides separately and alternately. Increase the period of standstill to 9 seconds, thus, making four movements to a minute, one on each side!

These variants have the additional advantage of stretching all sets of muscles—whether anterior, posterior or lateral—supporting the trunk by alternate flexion and extension. They also supply some sort of an indirect massage to those internal organs which are just below the ribs and the abdominal muscles.

### SUPPLENESS AND ELASTICITY

5 Again, according to Yoga, in considering slimness, suppleness and elasticity of the body, the training of the abdominal muscles needs special emphasis. This for the simple reason that in women, the abdominal protuberance excluding pregnancy, is often more apparent than real since it is due more to the flabbiness of the abdominal walls rather than to an increase of fat. The best corrective is to improve the tonus of the abdominal muscles.

## SUPPLENESS AND ELASTICITY

What needs to be pointed out is that slimness alone is not suppleness. The composition of the traditional yoga poses quite clearly indicates that both for health and beauty of symmetry what is regarded as equally essential is not mere slimness but suppleness. Indeed, a slender figure is preferable to a bulky one, but a lissom body (*mrnala komalavapu*) is even more preferable to a slender one. Health and youth are in no sense a monopoly of either, but, of these two, suppleness is an indication of natural harmony that exists between the various parts of the body and which must be encouraged through suitable exercises, if the body is to retain its normal pliancy.

The modern advocates of "grow old youthfully," who specifically emphasize elasticity for youth, quote in their favour the following three scientific facts: (i) In the case of bones, as we grow in years, the cartilages of childhood give place to hardened mineral substances. No sooner the percentage of this mineral matter—the lime salts, chiefly calcium phosphate—increases than the cartilages gradually begin to ossify and become more and more brittle. In the advanced years, this mineral deposit in the bones, on reaching an abnormal proportion, causes old age. (ii) In the circulatory system too, the accumulation of sedimentary mineral deposits tends to inelasticity of the body in general and arteriosclerosis in particular, and thus hastens old age. (iii) As to the muscular system, inelasticity causes stiffness, which really is the hardening of the muscular tissues, besides conducing to loss of the normal tone and pliancy.

## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

These factors ultimately disturb the natural harmony between the various internal organs always ending in some form of physical deterioration vaguely called old age

In the yoga sense, the muscle-tied knotted body acquired through the methods of strenuous physical training, athleticism and hard games is not only unhealthy but even harmful because it *disturbs the natural elasticity, balance and co-ordination* between the various parts of the body as well as the internal organs. What is most desirable, according to Yoga, is the preservation of that child-like flexibility of every part of the body which upholds the relative harmony between and within the internal organs

In effect, Samford Bennet merely stresses what was so well emphasized by the ancient yogins in respect of the difference between the young and the old. He states, "The elasticity of youth gives place to the inelasticity of old age. The *only difference*, therefore, between a young body and an old one seems to be the elasticity of the former and the inelasticity of the latter."

It means that in order to maintain youth and thus to defer old age, one must encourage suppleness and elasticity of the body. This aspect of yoga physical education deserves special attention of a woman as much for hygienic as for aesthetic reasons. According to Yoga, the best exercises are those which bring into action large groups of muscles and, thus, develop the body as a whole both within and without

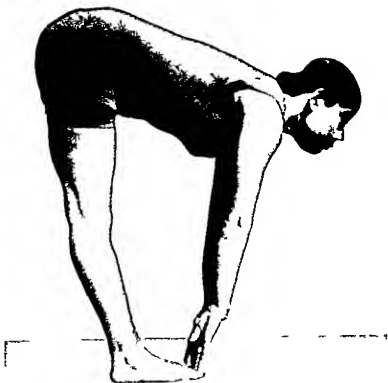


FIG 7

TRIKONASANA OR THE TRIANGLE POSE DESIGNED AS AN  
EQUILATERAL TRIANGLE TO SHOW THE BEAUTY OF  
POSTURAL SYMMETRY

## TRIKONASANA

### [ TRIKONASANA

6 For suppleness and elasticity, a novel form of stretching of the various ordinarily unexercised muscles of the body may be found in the posture known as *trikonasana* or the triangle-pose. Through the exceptionally straight and full length adjustments of the bony structure of the arms, the spine and the legs, their somewhat mechanical bearing causes performance such type of direct stretching as is otherwise not available. In its dynamic variation, this is considerably enhanced.

I Stand erect with the feet together and the arms hanging at their respective sides. Slowly *exhale* while bending downward, keeping the legs straight. Only the upper part of the body above the waist need be lowered, and the legs kept perfectly straight pressed backward. Now, touch the toes with the tips of the fingers, the arms straight, the spine and the neck kept horizontal, the abdomen drawn in, the head thrown forward at an equal level and the eyes fixed on the tip of the nose. Maintain this pose during the retention of breath, as shown in Fig 7, then, return to the original position, while *inhaling*.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) touch toes, *exhale*, 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose as in Fig 7, *inspiratory standstill*, 6 seconds (alternatively, one minute — when normal slow rhythmic breathing should be followed with controlled abdomen), and (iii)

## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

return to starting position, inhalation, 3 seconds. Repeat without pause five times in a minute. 2

It may be pointed out that any failure to reach the toes in the first few weeks need not dishearten the aspiring student inasmuch as it happens to be a very common experience of most students. Even so, one must try for the best each day until finally the posture is well secured. Avoid jerks, hasty movements, heavy pulls of the muscles and undue strain. Should there be any muscular tenderness, however, consequent upon its peculiar stretching, the same may be relieved through hot fomentation, massage or other suitable measures. In the initial stages, it is enough to try and touch the toes before the posture is perfected in other details.

*Trikonasana* is an excellent exercise for correcting faulty posture-habits and enteroptosis. Its mechanical disposition poises the muscles of the spine and the neck, tones the abdominal walls and the support, stimulates the pelvic organs by replacement and compression, tends to normal flexibility of the waist, besides exercising the hips and stretching the muscles of the legs and arms as well as other parts of the body in general.

Of special interest are the many advantages of breathing in a quadruped level position. For example, clavicular breathing — the type of breathing scarcely performed consciously by many — which is incidentally enforced during this pose due both to the peculiar position of the body as

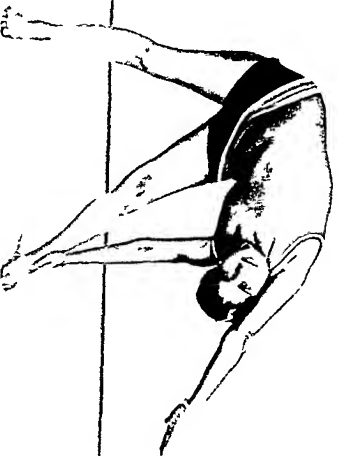


FIG. 8

A VARIANT OF THE TRIANGLE POSE BEST SUITED TO MAXIMUM LATERAL STRETCHING

## TRIKONASANA

also to the abdominal compression, considerably aids the proper ventilation of the apices pulmonis. Especially in the case of woman, such breathing is doubly essential since she labours under a distinct disadvantage of having smaller lung capacity than man.

II The above exercise may be supplemented by a simple dynamic variation of the triangle-pose. Stand with the feet twenty-four inches apart. Now, while inhaling, raise one arm and bend laterally on the opposite side sliding the other arm legwise. When the full lateral stretch is attained, retain the breath and pause awhile as in FIG 8. Slowly exhaling, return to the original position and repeat the lateral stretch on the other side.

( The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows: (i) sideward bend, inhale, 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose as in FIG 8, retention of breath, 6 seconds, and (iii) return to normal, exhale, 3 seconds. Repeat alternately, without a pause, ten times in two minutes, i.e. five rounds to each side alternatively. Whenever static effects are desired, the same may be maintained for a period of one minute on each side incorporating normal slow rhythmic breathing )

As a slimming measure, *trikonasana* and its variation also aid the reducing of fat by preventing its accumulation and by increasing the abdominal circulation, when maintained for a period of not less than one minute.



## CONSTITUTIONAL ESSENTIALS TO HEALTH

In the beginning, the postures may be maintained for 6 seconds, subsequently increasing the period to one minute, and repeated twice a day, i.e., both in the morning and in the evening. Of course, those with affections of the circulatory and respiratory systems should try it in moderation and even then for a very short duration only—not more than 10 seconds at any one time. After the fourth month of pregnancy, women should discontinue this exercise in order to avoid any internal pressure upon the gravid uterus.

### GARUDASANA

7 { Further, suppleness and elasticity also imply freedom of movements for the joints and the extremities. For this, scientific Yoga proposes a number of postures involving simple body-twists. The comparatively easy method to achieve this objective is to start with the twists of the extremities, viz., the arms and the legs. *Garudasana* or the eagle-pose is an excellent exercise which embodies in one pose the twofold twists of the extremities.

Stand erect as in FIG 1. Lift any leg—the alternate use of each leg being implied—and twist the same both near the hip-joint and the knee, then twine one leg around the other. Adjust the twists very carefully and without strain. Now, lock the ankle, as it were, with the toe of the other twisted leg and hold it there as a safety against possible release. Do this while exhaling. When the balance on one leg is secured, try to keep the body straight and increase gradually the pressure of the toe-hold near the



FIG 9

GARUDASANA OR THE EAGLE-POSE WITH THE VARIOUS  
TWISTS FOR SUPPLENESS AND FREE MOVEMENTS OF

## GARUDASANA

opposite ankle till the maximum twist is obtained. First practise only the leg twist, during the retention of breath, for a week or so, and, when this is well-secured try the arm and hand-twists by twining one arm around the other (alternating the arm with each movement). Likewise twist the hands also from the wrists and join the palms against each other. For the correct details of technique, refer to Fig 9. Maintain the pose for some time, and while inhaling, return to the starting position.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) body-twist, exhalation, 5 seconds, (ii) maintain pose as in Fig 9, retention of breath, 10 seconds (alternatively, normal slow rhythmic breathing, if maintained for longer periods not exceeding 2 minutes), and (iii) return to starting position, inhalation, 5 seconds. Repeat alternately three times on each side in 2 minutes, usually in the morning ]

This posture helps to loosen the joints by exercising the tendons and muscles of the shoulders, elbows, wrists, hips, knees and ankles. When practised regularly, it encourages suppleness of the arms and legs through specific exercise of the tendons and ligaments thereof thus ensuring complete freedom of movements for the various joints. Avoid strain while twisting, and practise and perfect it by stages.

## CHAPTER IV

### EXERCISING THE TRUNK

UNHYGIENIC OVERWEIGHT — ABDOMINAL TONICITY —  
HASTAPADANGUSTASANA — VARIATIONS OF HASTAPADASANA

#### UNHYGIENIC OVERWEIGHT

QUITE IN contrast to slimness, suppleness and elasticity is the problem of unhygienic overweight. Aesthetically, the slim figure is the aim and desire of all women — and properly so. For not only is the slim figure a thing of beauty but it is also a sign that the owner is careful about her health and its civic and social implications, and, further, that she is adhering to some sound principles of living. Of course, all women may not have slim figures of exactly the right proportion, but, certainly, all women can have figures free from the unbeautiful rolls of flesh which sometimes gather above the hips and from thence spread to other parts of the body.

Corroborated by biostatistical evidence, it is now generally recognized that every pound of flesh above the approximate normal weight — especially in persons over the age of forty — proportionately shortens a year of solid

## UNHYGIENIC OVERWEIGHT

living from the tenure of life The redundancy of fat—the exact opposite of what is commended by Hathayoga as the delicate slimness of a lotus-stalk (*mrnalakomalavapu*)—should, therefore, be dreaded for two simple reasons first, because it is unlovely, and, secondly, because it is detrimental to good health and longevity

Added to this fact, during recent years, slimness has come in fashion, and, as a consequence, the feminine public has decidedly become weight conscious To the modern woman, therefore, the Hathayoga ideal of a slim figure must have a special appeal whether for good health, beauty or longevity—let aside its higher and psychic perspective

Unfortunately, however, the beauty aspect in health has been so much over-emphasized in recent years that quite a number of queer measures are resorted to by fat people to acquire a slim figure The treatments extend from strict dietary to swallowing of patent remedies In a majority of cases, these slimming measures have not only proved useless but even injurious In countries where at present fashion rules the feminine vanity, even deaths have been reported through undernourishment and misadventure

(a) *Overweight Its Causes and Treatment* In the first place, it may be observed that the abnormal accumulation of unhealthy fat should be considered more a symptom rather than a disease, especially in view of the recent findings which ascribe the accumulation of fat largely to

## EXERCISING THE TRUNK

psychological factors In the second place, apart from the subnormal functioning of certain endocrine glands which apply to limited cases only, unhygienic overweight is, more often than not, due physiologically to overnutrition, to underoxidation or to a combination of both acting together The unused surplus is then stored up as deposits of fat in the tissues least disturbed by muscular action This excess when limited to omentum and mesentery is hardly noticeable, but, when the local deposits are made in the region of the abdominal walls and the hips, they not only present an ugly appearance but also offer great difficulty in their removal

Further, while most people acquire fat because of such faulty habits of living as habitual over-eating and lack of exercise, the most common cause, however, may be traced to improper elimination Especially in the case of women, constipation is usually the predisposing factor, even though there are many other minor functional disturbances which may naturally lead to overweight Here again, women are constitutionally a little more subject to the curse of constipation than men because of the anatomicophysiological differences about the lower abdomen and the pelvis

Keeping in mind the fact that the physical training and the need of the fair sex, therefore, consist also, besides other things in taking care of her abdominal and pelvic viscera, the value of certain yoga postures for exercising the trunk as an essential course of physical training for woman becomes self evident The clinical experience of the past

## FOOD FOR HEALTH

many years at the Institute indicates that the best way to fight fat is *first* to fight constipation itself by gradually stopping the use of laxatives and substituting the same by suitable yoga physical exercises which take good care of the mid-trunk. The specific advantages of the yoga posture-exercises which invigorate the muscles and walls of the abdomen, as an unfailing treatment of chronic functional constipation, have in recent years been fully acknowledged by many scientists and leading physical culture enthusiasts.

(b) *Food for Health* The problem of quantity and quality of food is as important for health as is the problem of physical exercise. No amount of exercise could proffer all the hygienic good it can, if the quantity and quality of food remains unadjusted to individual physiologic need.

Especially in fighting constipation, food—the right kind of food—deserves proper attention. Bulk in the form of green leafy vegetables is as good for health as it is for curing constipation and, thus, for reducing weight. Cutting down the quota of essential nutrients with a view to reducing weight is unhygienic and even dangerous. Food is a source of energy which no woman should overlook in her craze to look slim and sylphlike. It too often occurs that more women than is ordinarily believed deny themselves enough food in the false hope that it will lead to some reduction in the size of their figure. Unfortunately, this assumption is so prevalent that girls even from their earliest teens begin to discard solid and sustaining food, and take to liquid or soft diet.

## EXERCISING THE TRUNK

The consequence of such low, unbalanced and inadequate diet is that the pelvic development — the mainstay of woman's health, strength and beauty — is arrested. And though the girls may grow normally in other respects, the size and strength of their pelvic organs remain like that of an immature girl. Apart from the loss of proportion which an ill-developed figure fosters, there is also the added risk to health both of the body and the mind due to impaired functions of the ovaries. For it is a scientific fact that on the normal functioning of the ovaries not merely the health but also the charm, personality and behaviour of a woman as woman depends.

In the light of the above, the sane course of action would be to eat the right quality of food in the right quantities. Given adequate and balanced diet, the individual has only to rely upon the influence of rational exercising to keep in check any tendency of the figure to outgrow the limits of changing fashion. Here it is that the yoga physical education comes to the help of the fair sex in an admirable way. What is more, the yoga postural training offered in this work requires no accessories, not much of personal guidance, less of muscular exertion and the least of violence which is involved in the too frequent repetitions as happens to be the case with all other systems of physical exercise.

### ABDOMINAL TONICITY

2 How much is good health dependent upon the care of the trunk is best known to the physiologists, for neither



## ABDOMINAL TONICITY

the extremities nor the head could ever perform the work of nutrition and elimination — the two fundamental biologic functions on which the very physical existence depends. It is, therefore, impossible to conceive of good health without in some form connecting it with the hygiene of the trunk.

Daily postural training co-ordinated to proper breathing generally supplies adequate exercise to the thorax. What, however, need special attention are the abdomen and the waist — the pelvic organs and the spine being treated separately. Sedentary life, faulty posture-habits and occupational contours first effect the abdominal tone before other harm is done. Any relaxation of the abdominal tonicity must, therefore, be guarded against, as a preventive measure. This can be done in two ways: (i) through the systematic exercise of the abdominal muscles by the anterior and posterior movements and (ii) through mechanical effects on the deep muscles by the intra-abdominal compression.

### [ HASTAPADANGUSTASANA √

3 With this end in view, to the list of the foregoing postures may be added the pose known as *hastapadangustasana* or the toe-finger-pose. Its traditional variants may be divided into forward and sideward movements.

I Stand erect with the legs straight and the chest thrown forward, the hands at the sides. While exhaling, slowly raise one leg — alternate use of the legs being

## EXERCISING THE TRUNK

implied — straight forward till it is brought at a right angle with the body. As far as possible, avoid bending either of the legs near the knee-joints. Balancing the body on one leg, stretch out the arms forward and either touch or take hold of the toes of the raised leg with the fingers of one or both hands as convenient, then, try and retain this position for a few seconds in the beginning during the suspension of breath. For technical details, refer to FIG 10. Inhale while returning to the starting position. Repeat thrice with each leg alternately in one minute, best practised in the morning.

To retain harmony, the pace of breathing should be adjusted to the need of the physical movement. The co-ordination of movements, breathing and time, however, should be as follows (i) one leg raise forward, exhale 2 seconds, (ii) maintain pose as in FIG 10, expiratory stand-still, 4 seconds, and (iii) return to starting position inhale, 2 seconds.

II In the above postural exercise, when the leg is raised sideward instead of forward, it forms a variant of the toe-finger pose. The other accessories of the movement remain the same as in the previous exercise. Repeat thrice with each leg alternately in one minute, it is best practised in the morning.

For those quite unaccustomed to such movements, the mere alternate raising of the leg is indicated without the need for any effort to touch or hold the toes with the fingers.



FIG 10

HASTAPADANCUSTASANA OR THE TOEFINGER POSE IS  
AN EXCELLENT MOVEMENT FOR REDUCING  
THE WAIST LINES

## HASTAPADANGUSTASANA

In their case, the alternate use of the legs only is indicated either alternatively or in rotation, the former being preferred. Three alternate rounds in each variety are enough, and the total time, in all, need not be more than two minutes.)

It may be observed that, in the early stages, if the fingers could not be made to touch the toes or if the knee of either leg bends slightly, try to rectify the error each day till the correct technique is acquired. During the initial attempts, if any strain is felt, place the hands on their respective hips, and practise only the leg movements.

Since the flexion of the hip followed by deep exhalation increases the abdominal compression, there is a simultaneous and proportionate rise in the intra-abdominal pressure. Further, the slow alternate movements act as a mild massage to the abdominal viscera by exercising those muscles and tendons of the lower abdomen and the hips which usually remain inactive otherwise. The posture, thus, effects abdominal tonicity favourably, and its value as a preventive measure in constipation and in reducing the waist-line may, therefore, be easily realized. In terms of scientific experience, it is no exaggeration to state that whether for good health, beauty or longevity, the waist-line is a fair guide, and further that "adding to the waist-line shortens the life-line."

### ( HASTAPADASANA

4 As the flexion of the hip improves, one should try to increase the intra abdominal pressure through the

## EXERCISING THE TRUNK

maximum stretch of the posterior muscles. This may be favourably influenced also through changes in vasomotoricity by the head-low trunk position during deep compression of the abdomen. This is best achieved in the arm-leg-pose or *hastapadasana* and its variation in standing.

I To begin with, first secure the triangle-pose (as in FIG 7) by standing erect with the feet together. Then bend down forward at a right angle while reaching the toes. Keep the feet together and the knees straight. What is essential is not to bend the legs under any condition because such laxity will deprive this exercise of its specific hygienic value.

Now, keeping the legs straight, exhale and bend forward the body above the waist slowly and tactfully in such a way as to avoid any muscular strain or unbearable pressure upon the internal organs. Try and hold the ankles with your hands, keeping the head vertically downward. Maintain this position during the suspension of breath for a few seconds, and, return to the starting position while inhaling.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) forward bend reaching the toes, exhale 2 seconds, (ii) maintain pose head downward, suspension of breath, 4 seconds, and (iii) return to starting position inhale, 2 seconds. Repeat with a pause of 2 seconds after each movement and complete six rounds in a minute.



FIG 11

HASTAPADASANA OR THE HAND LEG POSE  
IN STANDING IS VALUABLE AS A REDUCING  
EXERCISE FOR THE WAIST AND HIPS

## HASTAPADASANA

II If the holding of the ankles is not successful in the beginning as required in the first variation of the arm-leg-pose, try often and every day till you are able to reach the ankles with your hands. When this has become possible, hold the ankles tightly with the respective hands, fold the arms near the elbows, and draw the head nearer to the knees. This may be continued for a few weeks, when finally one should try and rest the forehead in the space above and between the two knees. See FIG 11

Of course, as in the first variant, one should exhale deeply while bending down, and maintain the pose during the expiratory standstill — in the alternative, slow, normal rhythmic breathing if the pose is to be continued longer than 4 seconds. What needs emphasis is that one should never try to breathe deeply while in this position for this may injure the delicate internal organs.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as in the previous exercise. Repeat with a pause of 2 seconds after each round, and complete six rounds to a minute, or, alternatively, one minute for the pose.

Perseverance is, indeed, necessary before one can realize the proper benefit from this or any similar exercise. To achieve the best hygienic results, one must keep at them for a long time instead of repeating the movements—at least a few minutes every day for a period of not less than two months—if one expects to get one's figure down again.

## EXERCISING THE TRUNK

to normal in the case of overweight. And remember, even after this, it should be practised more or less regularly, if one expects to remain at the weight one ought to be. Moreover, howsoever good a posture, one should always be careful not to overdo it, i.e., not to allow oneself to strain or fatigue. For a posture ceases to be hygienic when its physiologic reactions on the internal organs happen to be unfavourable or excessive, and the yoga physical exercises are no exceptions.

Postures which do not yield to effort in the morning may be tried in the evening since, at this time of the day, stretching and bending is easier. Later, after a few months, the same may be practised in the morning. In the beginning, a few seconds of static pose is enough which may be gradually increased to a period of from one to two minutes. Yoga postural exercises, either static or dynamic, which involve intra abdominal compression should be discontinued for the first three days of menstruation and also during advanced pregnancy.

By their twofold action, namely, the intra abdominal pressure and the extreme stretching of the posterior muscles effecting the abdomen, waist line and the hips these postures increase the tone of the abdominal and pelvic organs and also aid in the loosening, distributing or reducing of unhealthy fat. The clinical data of over a quarter of a century at the Institute leave no doubt about the wholesome physiological effects of the above postures in



## HASTAPADASANA

regulating proper elimination and, thus, preventing auto-intoxication and its consequent dangers

All waist-and-hip-movements which exercise and tense the abdominal and pelvic muscles or increase the intra-abdominal pressure are, therefore, the best means of avoiding or of relieving constipation. Especially those who are overweight will find in the above yoga posture-exercises an ideal combination of the waist-and-hip-movements

## CHAPTER V

### SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

THE SEX GLANDS — GLANDULAR SECRETIONS AND HEALTH — EPOTICISM DETRIMENTAL TO HEALTH — YOGA DIRECTIVES ON SEX — HEALTHY MOTHERHOOD FOR HEALTHY PROGENY — CARE OF THE PELVIC ORGANS — MATSYASANA — PARYANKASANA — ARDHA SARVANGASANA — VIPARITAKARANI — PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH.

#### THE SEX GLANDS

MEDICAL AUTHORITIES are of the opinion that if, in her youth, a woman displays an exaltation of all her faculties, an overflow of vital energy and an alluring physique, it is because she possesses the glands of her own—which are analogous to the man's interstitial glands—the ovaries. According to Stockham, "The ovaries bestow on woman the characteristics of sex. These mysterious bodies are the grand source of feminine attractions. Remove all other generative organs and you do not change her in this regard—remove the ovaries and she becomes masculine not only in character but also in appearance."

This physiologic difference between the sexes requires careful study even in matters of health and, therefore, of

## GLANDULAR SECRETIONS AND HEALTH

physical training which endows it For a little before, during and after puberty, these glands exert considerable influence on the inner harmony and good health of both the body and the mind It is a scientific fact that, as is the case with man, woman's vital power corresponds with her period of intense sexual life Poehl, Crofton, Brown-Sequard and other noted scientists conclude from their experiments that the increase in the individual's vitality follows proportionately the increase in absorption of the internal secretions of the gonads

### GLANDULAR SECRETIONS AND HEALTH

2 *The interdependence and close relationship that exist between the ovaries and the other secretory internal organs cannot be denied, and, thus, their importance for the organism has been proved beyond all doubt According to Lerch "They—the testicles and the ovaries—have been considered since time immemorial the fundamental characteristics of the male and female, and all that is admirable in man and woman has been thought to depend on the genital organs"*

This profound influence is due to the direct correlation between the ovarian function and that of all other organs When, however through lack of care, the ovaries slacken their special functions women reach the age at which their strength begins to fail and decrepitude comes into evidence Would she like to glide down this fatal slope? She has an alternative

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

Here again, constant advances are being made every day to our knowledge—even though some of the so-called new knowledge, in many essentials, merely confirms the old beliefs and traditions. Modern researches on internal secretions are adding to the popular belief that it is not only the care of one individual organ or the other that can contribute to good health, but it is the harmony between these various organs themselves which virtually promotes and maintains physical as well as mental health. The internal secretions of endocrine glands, thus, are at present regarded to be largely responsible for the development of both the body and the mind. It has even been stated by many enthusiastic endocrinologists that the future of therapy depends chiefly on the further development of treatment by hormones. This however, is not all truth for the glands of internal secretions while they furnish us with drugs of precision could by their administration help the body only in so far as they restore the biochemical and, therefore, the physiologic normalcy and thus enable it to produce antibodies to maintain a balance within the body. But, this is not all that is desired to solve the problem of good health. Because unless and until the failing organ is constitutionally and sufficiently revived to act and function normally, all stop-gap measures to prop up health by drugs and other artificial measures should be regarded as temporary and must eventually fail on the condition becoming chronic and drug tolerant.

## EROTICISM DETRIMENTAL TO HEALTH

Having realized this scientific fact thousands of years ago, the yogins did not pursue the debatable course of finding more and more drugs each day to preserve good health but applied themselves to more rational methods of constitutional regeneration of unhealthy organs whether glands, nerves, muscles or cells. That, of these, the endocrine glands could not be directly influenced is a fact fully known to the yogins, but equally confident were they of the experience that certain forms of exercise do enhance the tonus and activity of these organs. This has been amply demonstrated in many cases treated at the clinics of The Yoga Institute both in India and America.

### EROTICISM DETRIMENTAL TO HEALTH

3 When considering good health through physical education, therefore, the influence of sex—especially in the case of woman—could not, and should not, be overlooked. To add to the difficulties of this problem, as it were, the exploitation of sex instinct has not only become too common but reached even a new height in recent years with the growth of psychosexual and sensual literature and exhibitionism through vast mediums of the ever-increasing resources of propaganda and display. What is worse, its evil effects on the gentle sex because of her temperament and social environments—not to speak of the complicated physiologic responsibilities endangered by too frequent repetitions of stimulation-complexes as a receptor—have been appallingly great. As a consequence, the tendency to

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

uneasiness, ill health, nervous prostration, psychosis and the secret sufferings of many women — particularly among the grown-up girls remaining unmarried — may be definitely attributed to the perverted modern sex perspective and propaganda reflected in their day-to-day living. It is also a fact that constant irritation and ill-satisfied impulses of the sex generally lead to congestion of the reproductive organs, and, if persisted in too far, it invariably results in sexual neurasthenia, hysteria, irritability of the mind and similar symptoms which disturb the harmony between the body and the mind. And, good health without inner harmony is impossible no matter how much and what nature of physical exercises one may take.

### YOGA DIRECTIVES ON SEX

4 It has been the aim of Yoga to maintain the maximum of inmost natural harmony between thoughts, feelings and acts in all that concerns life and, as such, even in matters sexual. Its directives in this regard are abundantly clear and may be summed up in two simple words, namely, (i) purity and (ii) moderation.

The ethical evaluation and guidance for behaviour in sex have already been explained in the volumes of the *Scientific Yoga Series*. Its emotional, mental and psychic aspects become the matter for discussion in the other volumes of this series. Purity and moderation physiologically imply personal hygiene. So, for our present purpose, what is essential from a strictly physiologic point of view

## YOGA DIRECTIVES ON SEX

is the exposition of such practical processes as directly effect the health of the sexual organs and—in the case of women—contribute to prolonged youth, happy married life and healthy motherhood

The vast problem of sex, in the physical sense, thus, amounts to the development of healthy sex organs and the preservation of their normal functions conducive to healthful living and longevity. Yoga aside, any neglect of hygienic laws must necessarily lead to ill health. In this regard, what is most curious and significant is the fact that howsoever much the mystic or the theoretical Yoga propose to evade or eliminate sex, scientific Yoga—as becomes any exact science fully alive to realism—has at no stage neglected the hygiene and scrupulous care of the sex organs and the sublimation of sexual instinct. Its modest claim is that, through purity and moderation in sex, vigour is obtained. The cumulative findings of modern sciences are only now able to prove conclusively how well founded is this ancient claim of practical Yoga.

### HEALTHY MOTHERHOOD FOR HEALTHY PROGENY

5 Furthermore, it is also a well-established fact that the most injurious influences affecting the physical and mental conditions of young children arise from heredity and the habits and practices of their parents. That even the characteristics of good health may be traced to parents adds social significance to a mother's personal good health. According to Doncaster, 'The mother's influence on the

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

children is closely similar to that of the father. The conclusion is therefore reached that not only bodily characters but also those of the mind are essentially determined by the hereditary endowment received from the parents."

Of these two, the environment of the infant is its mother. Education for infant welfare should, therefore, rightly begin with the problem of healthy motherhood. Healthy motherhood, in turn, depends primarily on perfect physique and includes, among other things, love of beauty and youth which are instinctively the guiding principles of a woman.

Again, to maintain the beauty of features and the abundant vitality, which display themselves through suppleness of the body and gracefulness of movements, is equivalent, in woman, to retrieving the joy of living. Radiant motherhood means youthful vigour, physical symmetry and feminine sentimentality harmonized to biologic and mental discipline of mother instinct. Thus, the desire in woman to keep young is only one of the fundamental requirements of healthy motherhood. What is more relevant is that careful and still more sensitive than men, women prefer to *remain young rather than to re-become young*.

### CARE OF THE PELVIC ORGANS

6 In terms of Yoga what is necessary to keep young is for a woman to look after the development and health of her internal organs of secretions alike her muscular and



## CARE OF THE PELVIC ORGANS

nervous systems, especially those organs which are contained within the waist zone and the pelvis

In this connection, it may be pointed out that, contrary to the popular aesthetic concept of a small waist, however, Kellogg maintains that "A woman requires a larger waist for the reason that in women the liver, stomach, spleen, kidneys, pancreas and colon—all the organs which lie in the waist zone—are relatively larger than in men, that is, they are larger in proportion to the body weight. This, of course, is a necessary consequence of the function of motherhood. The liver, stomach and other vital organs of women are prepared to do work for two, hence their larger proportionate development. The idea that a woman's waist must be small is an absurd and most pernicious error which has been created and propagated by the fashion-mongers. A small waist is an evidence of weakness. A very small waist necessarily implies prolapsed stomach and bowels, often a dislocated liver and a floating kidney. These displacements are a serious cause of disease."

But health of the internal organs is again dependent on proper nutrition and drainage. What is meant by nutrition is an ample and even supply of rich pure blood through adequate exercise to sustain such process, and by drainage, the complete elimination of all physiologic impurities (*malasuddhi*) through systematic stimulation of the organs of elimination. So, if the youthful organs and, particularly, the ovaries are to be preserved, a woman should practise such yoga methods as contribute to their health.

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

Viewed negatively, besides loss of vitality, the impaired functions of the ovaries adversely affect also the personal character of the individual as is evident from the unfeminine demeanour of the spinsters. Practically, Yoga discovered and emphasized these fundamentals of preserving youth (*sodasabdālaya*), and, on the basis of this very imperative need, the ancient yogins formulated, after ages of personal *experimentum crucis*, certain forms of postures and processes which are expected to influence in a great measure the development and health of the internal organs contained within the waist zone and the pelvis.

Due to modern habits and conditions of work, the pelvic organs often suffer from congestion. In the case of abdominal ptosis, such evil effects are heightened by the pressure of the abdominal organs just above, and, consequently, normal free circulation of blood in these organs becomes disturbed. A vicious circle of ailments soon follows which jeopardizes the health of the abdominal viscera and the sex organs *vice versa*. Unfortunately, woman is more susceptible to this ailment than man because of the presence of her complex and vital sex organs within the same cavity. The latter often become stimulated—pathologically irritated and congested—now more than ever, since sex exigency and appeal have been publicly advocated and commonly displayed. The growing unnatural habits of physical and mental living further add to the already weakened organs an extra burden hard to eliminate.

## MATSYASANA

With resultant constipation as the first evil and congestion of sex organs as the other, the urgent need for maintaining the muscular tone and normal blood circulation of the lower abdomen and the pelvic organs seems at once evident. According to Yoga, full stretching of the anterior and deep muscles is what is physiologically indicated in devising posture-exercises for the abdominal and pelvic tonicity for the obvious scientific reason that any possible deep pressure upon those internal organs could be exerted only during maximum stretching.

With reference to this, it is necessary to caution all students of Yoga that the knotted muscular development of the abdominal muscles so widely advertised by the modern physical culturists is quite unnecessary hygienically and in the case of women, even positively harmful. With Quixotic tendency in physical education, a vulgar element of acrobaticism seems to have been lately introduced in the healthful posture-exercises of Yoga by a section of physical culture enthusiasts who are dabbling in this subject much to the discredit of this simple, non-violent and non-fatiguing system of physical education *par excellence*.

### MATSYASANA ✓

[7 Easy yet effective among such poses as contribute to the health of the sex organs may be mentioned the fish-pose or *matsyasana*. This posture supplies gentle exercise, internal massage through deep pressure and stretching of

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

the mid-trunk and the sex organs within the pelvis—including, of course, the ovaries

To assume the fish-pose, first of all sit with your legs fully stretched out. Now, adjust the foot-lock as in the semi-lotus pose (p 49) by folding the legs at the knee-joints in such a way that the feet are set against their opposite groins with the soles turned upward. Then, reclining towards the back, while *inhaling*, slowly and carefully fall behind—if necessary by taking aid of the arms—by resting the weight of the trunk on the elbows. Finally, lie supine with the folded legs—the foot-lock intact. When the pose so far is well-secured, fold the arms under the head by holding them crosswise and resting the back of the head thereon. Maintain this pose as in FIG 12 during the inspiratory standstill, and return to the starting position while *exhaling*.

The movements, breathing and time in the above posture should be co-ordinated as follows (i) recline backward with foot-lock, *inhale*, 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, FIG 12, retention of breath, 6 seconds, and (iii) return to starting position, *exhale*, 3 seconds. Repeat five times to a minute—alternatively, maintain the pose for from one to three minutes as convenient. In the case of latter, however, normal, rhythmic and slow breathing should be followed instead of the inspiratory standstill ]

Variations of this posture may be so improvised as to effect other organs of the body by such additional move-



FIG 12

MATSYASANA OR THE TRADITIONAL FISH POSE FOR INCREASING CIRCULATION  
IN THE MID TRUNK AND PELVIC REGIONS

## PARYANKASANA

ments as the arching of the spine and the neck, etc., while in the above position. The simple fish-pose, however, as described above is sufficiently helpful in providing exercise for promoting health of the deeper sex organs without the need of complicated and operose alternatives. This posture is best practised in the morning [During the last few months of pregnancy, its practice is contra-indicated]

It may be readily seen that, by checking the free circulation of blood to the extremities, the trunk naturally derives the benefit of an increased blood supply which, in turn, favourably effects the circulation within the waist zone and the pelvis. Moreover, the tense abdominal and pelvic muscles cause very deep pressure on the internal organs and, thus, aid the venous flow to be compensated naturally by a fresh supply of blood. When practised with abdominal breathing, which is indicated in this pose, and followed rhythmically and deeply, the twofold action of posture-cum breathing in this specific combination supplies the much needed internal massage to the various endocrine glands contributing also to the health and tone of the sex organs.

### ✓ PARYANKASANA (

8 More advanced and effective than the above, for the very same purpose, is the posture known as *paryankasana* or the hams-pose. First assume the ordinary kneeling pose, then, sit on the calves by folding the legs from the knee-joints under the thighs and placing the feet under the

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

buttocks While thus seated on the hams, the legs together, slowly lean backward with the aid of the elbows (as in the previous posture) and lie supine Keep the knees together — since separating them minimizes the force of abdominal and pelvic stretching—and the neck and the body straight (flat) Now, interlace the fingers and hold the hands over the chest as shown in Fig 13

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) recline on hams-pose, inhale, 4 seconds, (ii) maintain the static pose as in Fig 13, followed by slow, normal and rhythmic breathing, as long as convenient—but not more than two and a half minutes, and (iii) return to normal while exhaling, 4 seconds Any dynamic repetition of this posture deprives it of its real hygienic significance, and the hams-pose should, therefore, be practised as a static exercise It has been observed that, during this posture, abdominal breathing when followed in slow rhythm is more beneficial than the clavicular or costal breathing For the first few months, it should be attempted usually in the evening when it may be found easier of practice than in the morning )

In the beginning, however, try the flexion of the knees only When this part of the technique is fully mastered, complete the posture as in Fig 13 In fact, being a graded training course, it is assumed that the yoga physical exercises previously recommended have already been accomplished in their usual sequence Although at first sight, this pose may appear difficult, repeated attempts will

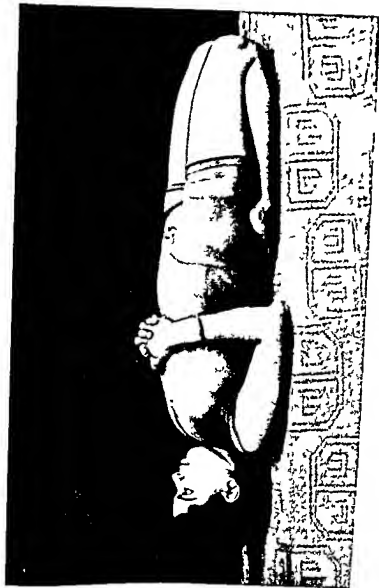


FIG 13

PARYANKASANA OR THE HAMPS POSE FAVOURABLY AFFECTS THE MUSCULAR  
TONE AND INTERNAL SECRETIONS OF THE SEX ORGANS



## ARDHA-SARVANGASANA

show how to overcome the preliminary inconvenience at complete flexion of the knees and any strain about the pelvis and the spine. To begin with, maintain the pose for only a few seconds, and then gradually increase the period to two and a half minutes as suggested previously. Later when this is found easy, practise it in the morning along with the other yoga exercises.

Besides the full stretching of the abdominal and pelvic muscles anteriorly and antero-internally, even the muscles on the inner side of the thigh derive the hygienic advantage of the maximum stretch. Its special virtue, thus, lies in the exerting of deep pressure on the utero abdominal and genito urinary organs by stretching of the anterior abdominal muscles which usually become relaxed. Its physiologic reactions ensure an increase both in the muscular tonus and in a fresh supply of blood to the abdominal viscera, including the sex organs. Further such training of the deep muscles of the sex organs is of inestimable value to a woman during pregnancy and even for painless childbirth. During pregnancy (after the fourth month) and menstruation (the first three days), it is advisable to discontinue the practice of this posture.

### ARDHA SARVANGASANA

9 That an increase in the deep venous circulation is a remedial measure positively indicated for counterbalancing any abnormal condition of congestion either local or

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

general, was fully realized by the ancient yogins. Only recently has this fact been acknowledged by Carrel, Arbuthnot Lane and other scientific authorities who insist on proper venous drainage as an essential condition to good health.

While it is admitted that much may be gained through physical exercise, massage and other similar measures in aiding deep venous circulation, what still remains as an essential factor to achieve this satisfactorily, according to Yoga, is the proper or favourable position of the body to accelerate such drainage of the blood vessels connected particularly with the abdominal and pelvic organs. The best yoga method to encourage this process is the exaggeration of the opposite. For this purpose, the aid of gravitation is sought with considerable advantage, and the head-low hips-high postures have been recommended as the ideal means to this end.

✓ The all-body-reverse pose known as *sarvangasana* is most suited to this purpose, but, as the systematic physical training for the fair sex, its initial variation may be adopted safely for daily practice. For reference, this initial stage may be termed *ardha-sarvangasana* or the semi-reverse pose.

First lie supine, then, draw your feet nearer to the hips, fold the legs against the thighs, now, with a little jerk and a pull of the abdominal muscles, raise the lower part of the body from the ground by placing the hands under and



FIG 14

ARDHA SARVANGASANA OR THE SEMI REVERSE  
POSE AN INITIAL STAGE IN THE STUDY OF ALL-  
BODY POSE (COMPLETE REVERSE) FOR PELVIC  
DRAINAGE

## ARDHA-SARVANGASANA

above the hips, and then — while exhaling — by balancing evenly the entire body-weight upon the palms, the elbows, the neck and the back of the head. For details, refer to FIG 14. Since no dynamic movements are advisable, this pose may be maintained for a period of two minutes — slow, normal, rhythmic breathing being indicated. Return to the starting position while inhaling.

The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) raise body, exhale, 4 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, FIG 14, normal breathing, not more than 2 minutes, and (iii) return to starting position, inhale, 4 seconds. Do not repeat, nor practise it beyond the limit of time above specified because a longer duration, if it is to be practised along with other daily yoga physical exercises, may, in some cases, prove injurious. It is best performed on an empty stomach, after a movement of the bowels and, in the evening, before taking food.)

[Those suffering from the diseases of the heart or the respiratory organs should take to its practice with sufficient caution. Until perfect balance is secured, one may take the aid of any object against which to fall back (Stout persons should avoid strain and might do well,) if in the beginning, they try to improvise this pose by resting against a wall or any solid object while in the head-low position. Even the aid of a few pillows or personal assistance from other person may not be out of place during the initial practice.

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

### VIPARITAKARANI

10 Although apparently a postural exercise, *viparita-karani* or the technique of retrofusion has been spoken of as a *mudra* (neuromuscular control) For the health of the sex organs, its hygienic effects are very marked This for the simple reason that it encourages inner coherence through regulation of the pelvic circulation and evenness of blood by assisting the drainage of venous flow from the deep sex organs It should be undertaken only after the semi-reverse pose has been fully mastered

Lie supine with the body at full length and all the muscles relaxed, with the arms at their respective sides Now, assuming the semi-reverse pose as previously, slowly raise the legs high up perpendicular to the ground. Press the hands under the hips and raise the lower portion of the trunk by using the elbows as a fulcrum, exhale Keep the trunk in a slanting position, the legs upright and the back and the neck well rested on the ground By careful manipulation, shift your hands slowly from the hips to the waist with the fingers extended to the back of the hip-bones and the thumbs pressed lightly on both sides of the navel See FIG 15 This pressure of the thumbs on both the sides may be increased or decreased by adjusting the grip as necessary with a view to regulating the venous flow in the common iliac veins Even while one may depend upon the normal reaction of vasomotoricity to control the influx of blood consequent upon gravity pressure, it cannot be denied that, if the rush of venous blood remains continually unchecked



FIG 15

A STUDY IN SILHOUETTE OF VIPARI  
TAKARANI OR THE PROCESS OF  
RETROFUSION TENDING AS AN  
AFTER EFFECT TO EVENNESS OF  
BLOOD AND HARMONY IN THE  
BLOOD STREAM

or rapid, it may lead to undue pressure upon the heart, the respiratory organs and the brain, thus, causing giddiness or feeling of discomfort and enlargement of the caliber of the blood vessels in the head

Alternatively, when practising the semi-reverse pose, one could easily learn the technique of retrofusion by extending the legs upward, shifting the hands to proper position and keeping the chin free. Abdominal breathing during the semi-reverse or head-low poses is doubly effective and should be incorporated while maintaining this exercise. Return to starting position and inhale. Do not repeat the movement since its physiologic benefits accrue most during the static condition than otherwise.

(The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) body raise, exhale, 4 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, Fig 15, from a half to 2 minutes, slow normal, rhythmic abdominal breathing, and (iii) return to starting position, inhale, 4 seconds. It may be practised either in the morning or in the evening. This exercise is likely to offer some difficulty to stout persons, but the same may be soon overcome if the attempts are continued each day with the aid of a suitable medium. It is best tried on an empty stomach and usually after an attendance to calls of Nature )

According to the authorities on Hathayoga, this exercise of retrofusion or inverted balance has been formulated particularly with the object of bringing about inner harmony and union of the opposites, e.g., the blood streams

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

(arterial and venous), the nerve impulses (afferent and efferent), and the positive and negative counterparts of bionergy, etc., with the aid of gravitation. Besides healthful mental and psychic benefits, it is stated that this process aids digestion, turns grey hair to the original colour and regalanizes the body with youthful vigour thus deferring old age and even death. That such an exercise must really contribute to many physiologic advantages is evident when it is realized that it promotes evenness of blood by exaggeration of the opposite, acts as a replacing medium and thus corrects enteroptosis and reverses the pressure on the abdominal viscera, besides increasing supply of blood to the thorax and the head.

The laboratory data available at the Institute indicate that among the physiologic advantages — which very few modern exercises can claim — may be mentioned an increase in the venous flow, the temporary relief to abdominal and pelvic organs from congestion due to pressure, the marked improvement in the depth of general circulation, a rapid interchange in supply and quality of blood to the vital glands and nerve centres in the neck and the head, and the muscular ease to the lower parts of the body from constant weight of the upper organs. Besides these general effects, there is also a wholesome increase in the activity of the lungs by nearly 50 p c. The rise of 20.4 per cent in the blood pressure and the sharp ascension in pulse rate by 41 per cent in the first minute indicate a very perceptible increase in the activity of the respiratory and circulatory



systems Particularly in woman, the internal reactions during this exercise are quick and continuous but respond to relaxation immediately

The effects of all these interactions with the minimum expenditure of energy demonstrate the many specific advantages of yoga physical education over other systems especially suited to the physiologic needs of a woman In popular terms, the scientific data on the yoga process of retrofusion reveal that, in order to bring about similar internal reactions, one has to climb up and down three flights of stairs (Stewart) or run nearly a mile at the rate of six miles an hour (Rubner) In the case of latter, however, the high rate of energy expenditure virtually reduces the percentage of net gain besides involving long periods for replenishing wasted tissues during these muscular exertions In effect, it is self-evident that those modern methods of physical training for health which entail much waste of muscular tissues are actually a misnomer in a strictly scientific sense or from a long range perspective of good health and longevity

In functional disorders of the digestive organs and the assimilative system displacements of the abdominal viscera cerebral anemia sexual debility and congestion, prolapsus of the uterus hernia and varicose veins of the lower extremities and similar ailments, both the semi reverse pose as well as the process of retrofusion may be applied as a therapeutic measure with considerable benefit Those with affections of the heart or the lungs should study them per-

## SEX AND MOTHERHOOD

sonally only under the direct personal supervision of a qualified practitioner of Yoga and follow up the same for at least a month. During advanced pregnancy, its practice should be discontinued. Girls under the age of twelve years may safely avoid the head-low hips-high postures in order not to strain the blood vessels.

### PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH

11 In all that concerns sex physiologically, the consummation of ideal womanhood is motherhood. Motherhood includes pregnancy and childbirth, besides post-birth rearing and the maternal responsibilities. Any good system of physical education for woman must provide for healthy and normal pregnancy and painless childbirth.

Understanding and following the principles and practices of applied Yoga—the daily yoga physical exercises outlined in this work being a part of it, and the elaboration of many aspects of sex and motherhood appearing in *Yoga for Woman*—with fair knowledge of physiological laws, pregnancy ought to be as free from pathological symptoms and fright, and childbirth as void of gruesome experience with modern women as with any aborigines on earth or even with the lower animals. During pregnancy, yoga diet is the most suitable form of nourishment, and the processes of yoga cleansing and elimination supply the best antitoxic measures.

Painless childbirth could not mean the complete absence of pain, in effect, it should only mean an easy deliv-

## PAINLESS CHILDBIRTH

cry That such painless childbirth is quite possible and depends largely — besides certain incidental factors like the forms of presentation and the shape of pelvic inlet, etc — on the tone and power of contraction of the uterine and abdominal muscles is the confirmed opinion of many leading obstetricians Cowan, Dewees, Holbrook and other practitioners, testifying to painless parturition, further emphasize the great need of exercising — soon after puberty — through suitable methods not only the superficial but also the deeper muscles of the sex organs This is corroborated by the experience of many mothers who generally keep healthy and have given much thought and care to their physical well-being even before their married life In Yoga, the proof is to be sought through actual practice

## CHAPTER VI

### YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

HEALTH OF THE NERVES — HOW MIND AFFECTS HEALTH  
— NEURASTHENIA ITS CAUSES AND CURE — NEED FOR SPINAL  
EXERCISE — BHUJANGASANA — HALASANA — USTRASANA —  
RELAXATION — CONCLUSION

#### HEALTH OF THE NERVES

YAJNAVALKYA, MATSYENDRA, Goraksa, Svatmarama and almost all other authorities on Hathayoga are unanimously agreed that the sole purpose of yoga physical education is the elevation in health and efficiency of the nervous system. Yoga, thus, enforces the necessity of a healthy nervous system for the successful accomplishment of any physical, mental or moral undertaking. The converse is seen in the absolute loss of moral, mental and physical power in nervous prostration, so that moral resistance to evil, prolonged thinking and even talking and lifting of an arm become a great exertion. Only recently has this aspect of yoga physical education been sufficiently appreciated by McKenzie Lippitt and other modern authorities on physical training. To be more exact in terms of Yoga even those who appear healthy are not healthy so long as their nerves remain dis-

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

For example, sorrow retards digestion even if all the digestive organs be in their normal condition, while joy accelerates blood circulation without any added physical activity. Emotional glycosuria, interstitial nephritis and many such diseases may often be traced directly to the mind acting through emotional disturbances affecting the endocrine glands

Having applied this test to moral life in relation to good health, the yogins further assert that immoral life creates psychic complexes and discord which become translated into mental disturbances affecting, likewise, the endocrine glands and, thus, the individual's health. Consequently, Yoga recognized the fact that the curves of physical health rise and fall in perfect harmony with the changes that take place every moment in our inner living, and also that this mental life, to a very large measure, is influenced by and through the activities of the nervous system

Apart from the general care of the nervous system, the health of the nerves could be aided also through physical education. In Yoga, therefore, the postures for the spine serve a twofold purpose, namely, (i) the keeping of the body and the mind free from such indispositions as are communicated through the nerves, and (ii) the gradual purification and control of both the conscious and the sub-conscious mind which, of course is the real and ultimate objective of Yoga. Only Montaigne realized the full significance of this vital conception of yoga physical education, when he passed on his watchword to the advocates of physi-

## NEURASTHENIA ITS CAUSES AND CURE

cal culture, and it is this that "we have not only to train up a soul nor yet a body, but *man*, and we cannot divide him"

### NEURASTHENIA ITS CAUSES AND CURE

3 To the experienced neurologist, it is a known fact that nine out of every ten women suffer from a certain amount of nervous instability, generally termed neurasthenia. In women, it should be regarded as more a disease of typical modern superfemininity than an abnormal condition of the nerve cells—an outcome of what the author would prefer to call insufficient personality control. Its wide association with sexual excitement and excesses, mental strain, anxiety and nervous exhaustion, etc., resulting in actual microscopic changes in the brain, liver and other glands (Crile) is merely the other side of the picture.

(a) *Symptoms of Neurasthenia* In the very early stages, this lack of personality control becomes manifest through a gradual loss of nerve force and of control over the body-movements. To ascertain such aberrations, the swaying in Romberg's position provides a simple test, and, at this stage, the same could be easily corrected if due care is given to general hygienic measures. Advanced conditions, however, call for special remedial measures limited not only to the physical care of the nervous system alone but also of the mind.

Fortunately, the need of care and control of the nerves is becoming more and more recognized now than ever

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

before as the best means of radical cure for neurasthenia which is on the increase among the gentle sex with the growth of modern complexities and of unending harassing demands upon the weaker sex under peculiar environments of unnatural living. It is undoubted that this ailment is found to be more common among women than among men and is variously known to the profession as neurasthenia, psychoneurosis or psychosthenia. The popular terms are nervous debility, mental weakness, prostration and irritability.

The characteristics peculiar to such neurasthenic persons are vagueness, want of determination and precision, brain-wandering, feelings of fatigue and inferiority, and a continued state of anxiety. What is worse, it is a confirmed scientific opinion that in this war-torn world, the percentage of persons suffering from this ailment will rise considerably.

Be that as it may, the neurastheniacs lack will-power, and the conception of their thoughts and actions is always feeble. The nervimotion and neuromuscular co-ordination remain poor and, consequently, lead to failure and accidents in the simple day-to-day routine. For instance, a person suffering from neurasthenia may go to fetch something from his or her room and when he or she gets there, he or she may forget just exactly what was wanted. What is most unfortunate is that, even when the life does not appear so gloomy, there is, at any rate, a lurking anxiety and dis-

## TREATMENT OF NEURASTHENIA

satisfaction, and the sufferer often does not know what actually he or she wants and what to do. Such persons, before the actual trouble starts, trade upon only a dangerously small nervous capital, and when this is heavily drawn upon, through emotional or physical strain of any kind, they become nervous bankrupts. The group of symptoms resulting from abnormal fatigability and severe depression of the vital forces includes, besides certain functional disorders of the various organs, general lack of energy, pain in the back, loss of memory, insomnia, constipation, loss of appetite and susceptibility to bacterial infections, etc.

This apparently harmless ailment which largely remains neglected in the early stages often goes beyond the physical plane of affecting only the nerves and may, in due course, lead to loss of control over emotions, thoughts and actions. While this may not actually amount to insanity, in most cases, it does represent a certain loss of control over nerves and also over personality.

(b) *Treatment of Neurasthenia* Clinical data of over a quarter of a century at the Institute indicate how successfully and easily could neurasthenia be treated with the aid of many simple yoga processes. Such practices are intrinsically suited to woman for the obvious reason that they are non-violent and non-fatiguing, besides being sedative. Since neurasthenia is the most common complaint of the modern woman, the author has thought it advisable to discuss it at the outset. The object is to show to the members of her sex who may be suffering from these illnesses, as well as



## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

the author can, why they are ill and how they can easily cure themselves without having to undergo the exposure and painful experiences which are the invariable results of such ailments. The methods of suggestion and treatment are founded on the fact that every form of neurasthenia is due mainly to insufficient personality control—so far improperly referred to as nerve control, brain control, will control and even self-control (the last word lacking in the emphasis of distinct personal characteristics which truly represent the individual, and hence the use of this new terminology)

From the experimental data available, it may be stated with confidence that the yoga training in the education and care of the nerves—including the purification and control—through physical exercise, hygiene, relaxation, concentration, and the cultivation of and the habituation to healthy mental outlook and atmosphere offer the best means so far known to science of a radical cure for neurasthenia. Roger Vittoz, the great neurologist, after years of careful research and experimentation, finally concluded that the above are about the only measures suited to the efficient treatment of neurasthenia.

### NEED FOR SPINAL EXERCISES

4 Of course, when training the nerves for endurance, balance and co-ordination etc, control of the action must

## NEED FOR SPINAL EXERCISES

be taught first, this being the simplest approach to the end in view. In the beginning, such methods are likely to appear even childish, but the hygienic results are nevertheless quite evident and could be relied upon. For this, the practice of corrective prayer poses should be utilized as the stepping stone.

Having regard to longevity, it may be observed that the degeneration of the nerve cells resulting in subnormal functions is one of the main causes of old age. Like every living organism, the efficiency of the nerve cells is also subject to proper nutrition and elimination (of poisons). Since, however, the nervous system is a very complex and delicate mechanism of the human body, any course of physical training designed to exercise the spine should necessarily take into account (i) the circulation of the spinal cord, (ii) the normal adjustments of the spinal vertebrae, (iii) the tonicity of the trunk muscles to hold the spine in its proper position, and (iv) the relief from muscular and nervous strain.

The exercises which could meet these requirements may be grouped into four divisions (i) the anterior stretching and posterior contraction, (ii) reversely, the anterior contraction and posterior stretching, (iii) the lateral twists, and (iv) the measures for local and general relaxation. Of these, the frequent twisting and stretching of the spine is possible, to a certain extent, during our daily physical activities, but the posterior contraction of the spine

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

requires a specially designed system of exercise. The deep muscles of the back—especially, at the small of the back—are hardly sufficiently used to encourage normal blood circulation around that area. In selecting exercises for the vertebral column, therefore, due attention must be given to the lower portion of the spine.

### BHUJANGASANA

5 Most of the yoga postures and allied processes provide some form of exercise for the spine for the reason that Yoga lays great emphasis on the care of the spinal column and the nerves. What the author proposes for the daily exercise, however, are the two simple poses for contraction intercepted by one counterpose for stretching. To begin with the technique of anterior stretching and posterior contraction, among the many poses, *bhujangasana* or the snake-pose may be regarded as an excellent technique for this purpose.

Lie on your stomach, the legs fully stretched out with the toes pointing outward, the arms kept at their respective sides with the palms down, while the forehead is rested on the floor. Slowly raise the head and the neck upwards and somewhat backwards. Then, after a little effort at this, when the head and the neck have been slightly raised, take aid of the arms by planting the hands on both sides of the abdomen. Now, while inhaling, gradually lift the thorax and the upper part of the abdomen by increasing the angle between the fixed hands and the rising shoulders. What is



FIG 16

BHUVANGASANA OR THE SNAKE-POSE BEST SUITED TO WOMEN FOR SPINAL  
EXERCISE AND ABDOMINAL AND PELVIC STRETCHING

essential to the pose is the condition that the body from the navel downward should not rise nor be lifted, but the same ought to remain fixed to the ground during the entire pose. It means that only *the upper portion* of the body above the waist is to be raised from the ground like the hood of a cobra. When doing this, use the deep muscles of the back and give a gradual but a full backward curve to the spine, thus, slowly raising the vertebrae one by one.

The ideoneuromuscular technique is first to press the back slightly backward, then, like one going down the steps of a ladder, one should feel the pressure on the spinal column travelling down the curve step by step as each vertebra is made to rise and adjust. In consequence, simultaneously with the act of raising the trunk, one should begin to feel a marked contraction first at the cervical, thoracic, lumbar and then at the sacral portions of the spine culminating into a very deep pressure at the coccygeal end. Of course, this should all happen slowly and in a rhythmic manner with a view to avoiding jerks and strain. For one reason or another, if the initial attempts prove unsuccessful, this standard technique may be modified to suit the individual need till complete mastery over the pose is firmly established. For particulars, refer to Fig 16, and maintain this pose during the inspiratory standstill.

While reverting to the starting position, *exhale*. It is right now that great care need be exercised in relieving the spinal pressure rather very slowly and by stages. In this case, contrary to the feeling of pressure by descension,

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

one should find relief in ascension through complete reversal of the previous ideoneuromuscular feeling and technique. Accordingly, the coccygeal and sacral curves are relieved first by simultaneous and slow lowering of the trunk until gradually the upper portions, i.e., the lumbar, thoracic and cervical curves are completely obliterated by stages. The spine now assumes its original and straight position free from any undue pressure upon any vertebrae.

[ The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) raising of thorax, inhale, 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, FIG 16, retention of breath, 6 seconds, or, alternatively, as a static pose, such period as convenient—not exceeding 2 minutes during which normal, slow and rhythmic breathing is to be followed, and (iii) return to starting position, exhale, 3 seconds. Repeat five times in a minute ]

For preliminary study, a pose of moderate intensity is indicated without any special breathing adjustments. Then, after a few weeks of trial, when one feels ease in doing it, the special breathing may be incorporated. Moreover, one need not be anxious about the results but should continue to follow this simple snake-pose for a month or so because its healthful effects are sure to be manifest in due course. It should be practised every day, especially in the evening on an empty stomach, and, as a dynamic movement, may be repeated five times with advantage. As a static pose, it

## HALASANA

should not be continued for more than 2 minutes as a daily routine )

This posture by alternate contraction and relaxation adjusts minor displacements of the vertebra, exercises and tones the deep muscles supporting the spinal column and the trunk, promotes spinal circulation, and helps to maintain the normal elasticity of the spine. The yogins rightly believe that this pose increases bodily heat (through the favourable reaction upon heat regulation through stimulation of the nerves), prevents disease (by aiding elimination through intra-abdominal pressure) and activates the bioenergy potential or kundalini (through direct influence upon the various plexuses, nerves and nerve cells). Relief from flatulence and abdominal adhesions may also be sought through this pose. In order to avoid any injury, however, it is advisable for the weak to obtain only a modicum of spinal pressure. {During menstruation, advanced pregnancy and in the case of hernia, its practice is contra-indicated.

## HALASANA

6 An excellent counter-pose to the above (snake-pose) may be found in the posture known as *halasana* or the plough-pose which may be followed next. If one feels tired, a pause of a few seconds is indicated before undertaking this posture.

First, lie supine on the floor with the arms resting at their respective sides palms downward. Then, raise both

sion of breath, 4 seconds — alternatively, normal slow rhythmic breathing when maintained for not more than two minutes, and (iv) return to starting position, partial inhalation, 2 seconds

Start with only one movement a day—the total time taken being not more than ten seconds during one round. After a few weeks, add more rounds and complete six rounds to a minute. Alternatively, as a static pose, add a few seconds of pause at its final stage, as in FIG 17, each alternate week, till the maximum pause of 2 minutes is reached. [In the beginning, it is best tried in the evening when the body is more supple than in the morning, but, once it is perfected, it should always be practised in the morning on an empty stomach] ]

Those with stiff muscles, inelastic or deformed spine, or overweight should begin with care and need not feel disappointed if, in the beginning, the toes do not actually touch the floor. By daily gradual practice forsooth this posture is sure to become easier each day. During the first few days of menses and the last five months of pregnancy, the practice of plough-pose is contra-indicated. Also those suffering from the prolapse of the uterus or some form of hernia (especially navel) should try this posture rather cautiously, and even then the same should be tried only in its dynamic secondary form i.e., with the folded or bent legs mainly with a view to reducing the muscular tension to the minimum.



## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

the legs together, slowly taking in the breath till they are brought to a right angle with the body. Now, with slow *exhalation*, raise the hips and lower the legs toward and beyond the head. As far as possible, keep the legs together and stretched-straight. Efforts should now be made to bend the spine gradually as the legs come nearer the floor beyond the head. After reaching the floor, the toes may be kept pointed outward, and the same may be slid farther away from the head with relaxing movements of the lower and upper dorsal regions. During its dynamic variation, the suspension of breath is indicated for a few seconds, whereas, during the static pose, normal breathing is to be resumed soon after the pose is well-secured. But remember always that, for the purpose of this exercise, it is better to breathe very slowly both during the inspiration and the expiration, the retention of breath being contra-indicated. The final stages vary according to the technique employed in the arrangement of the arms and the nature of spinal elasticity which is to allow maximum curve of the spine. As to the arms, they may either be kept in their original position as in Fig 17 or be placed behind the head with the elbow-fold and the finger-lock. The spinal stretch may be increased as desired by increasing the corresponding bend near the neck and also the extreme end of the spine

✓ The movements, breathing and time should be co-ordinated as follows (i) supine, raise legs to body right angle, inhale, 2 seconds, (ii) lower legs toward and beyond head, exhale, 2 seconds, (iii) maintain pose, Fig 17, suspen-

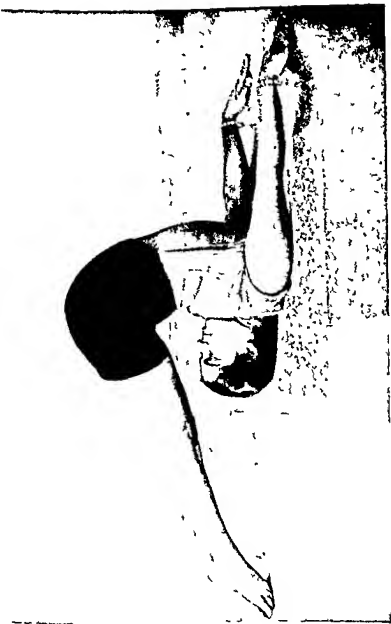


FIG. 17

HALASANA WITH THE HANDS EXTENDED AND THE TOES POINTING OUTWARDS BEYOND THE HEAD

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

Its special physiologic benefit lies in the healthful effects on the nervous and digestive systems and the genital organs. A very compelling observation is that the spine records a stretch of nearly 15 per cent over the normal—the measurement being taken from the top of the sacrum to the bottom of the occiput. It is, thus, self-evident that this postural exercise definitely enlarges the vertebral foramina through which the spinal nerves pass and thereby releases them from such pressure as may likely be inflicted on them due to any improper posture or other defects of carriage. It also relieves them from the usual pressure which generally rests upon them during normal work. What is vital is the fact that the acceleration of circulation in the spinal cord being assured, a steady improvement in the tone and activity of the internal organs directly influenced by these nerves naturally follows. Further, the stretching of the posterior muscles supporting the spine aids their pliancy and raises their tonicity.

As a cross-pose between *pascimottanasana* and *sartanagasana*, it bears the characteristic advantages of the posterior stretching, particularly, in a head-low position. Again, due to the anterior contraction, the inverted intra-abdominal pressure contributes largely to the proper drainage and functioning of the viscera through the replacement of the pelvic organs. It further strengthens the supporting muscles and ligaments of the uterus and the ovaries.

As a preventive measure, *halasana* is very effective in eliminating toxemia. Consequently, freed from any conti



FIG 18

USTRASANA OR THE CAMEL POSE FOR ANTE  
RIOR STRETCHING AND POSTERIOR CONTRAC  
TION PERFORMED IN A KNEELING POSITION

## USTRASANA

nuous or repeated toxic accumulation, the body becomes healthy, the nerves purified and the mind clear. Hysteria and neurasthenia—the nightmare of many a worried woman—could hardly find a lodging place in a body regularly and systematically trained each day by effective yoga exercises particularly suited to women. As a therapeutic measure, this pose is indicated in the treatment of constipation, chronic appendicitis, enteroptosis, obesity, sexual debility, menstrual disorders, and spinal rigidity, etc.

### USTRASANA

7 A very significant complimentary pose to the above exercise for anterior stretching and posterior contraction, which surpasses the many advantages of the snake pose, is the posture variously described by the authorities as *ustrasana* or the camel-pose. From the illustration, FIG 18, it is readily seen that this posture-exercise could be practised only by those who have already successfully followed all the previous exercises.

Assume a sitting posture as in kneeling. Support the body on the toes and the knees and gradually lean backward, after having fixed the arms from behind, the palms to the ground, the fingers pointing outward and the thumbs toward the toes. Keep the arms straight, then slowly lift the pelvis while taking in the breath. Now, press the body above the waist slowly both outward and upward, throwing the neck downward. In this posture the inverted pressure upon the vertebræ should begin to be felt from the small of

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

the back travelling upwards toward the shoulders and the neck—the relative stretching of the thighs, the abdomen, the thorax, the neck and the facial muscles to follow simultaneously and in due proportion. For correct technique, refer to Fig 18. When the pose is repeated, as a dynamic exercise, it should be maintained during the inspiratory standstill for 6 seconds. Repeat five times to a minute.

[The movements, breathing and time should be adjusted as follows (i) body lift upward and outward, inhale 3 seconds, (ii) maintain pose, Fig 18, retention of breath, 6 seconds—alternatively, not more than one minute as a static pose when breathing should be slow, normal and rhythmic, and (iii) return to kneeling position, exhale, 3 seconds. It is best practised in the morning.]

Besides the hygienic advantages derived from the snake-pose, this posture accelerates the splanchnic circulation, aids proper drainage through deep pressure, strengthens the urogenital muscles, exercises the spine and all the deep muscles of the inner side of the thighs, trunk and the neck. Its influence on the ovaries, thyroid and other endocrine glands is very favourable. It prevents flabbiness, and relieves vertebral pressure upon the spinal cord caused either by an improper posture-habit or faulty carriage.

Its practice should be limited to a very short duration and the same should not be repeated in the evening because it involves strong physiologic reactions upon the internal

## RELAXATION

organs All general instructions recommended for the snake-pose also prevail here)

### RELAXATION

8 Under modern conditions of physical stress multiplying distractions and mental strain, what is equally, if not more, essential than exercise for the health of the nervous system is recreation, relaxation and sleep This is so because it is a fact that every bodily power needs rest after exertion It is also known that even machines cannot operate without rest The heart rests between beats and the muscles relax after every contraction All bodily movements and—for that matter—even the mental activities involve some form of essential or subtle muscular contractions (Crichton-Browne)

During waking hours, thus, we constantly pass through a series of complicated muscular contractions which result from multifarious nerve stimuli The high tension of modern living further adds to the nervous strain and invariably devitalizes both the nervous and the muscular systems Besides recreation and sleep, therefore, the power to relax whenever fatigue is experienced is probably the only most important safeguard one can possess to keep these systems in their normally healthy condition

(a) *Yoganidra* Relaxation of the body and the mind has been aptly termed by the ancient yogins as *yoganidra* or the yoga sleep It represents the harmoniously blended condition of the body in half sleep and of the mind in half

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

abstraction It not only aids to switch off the nerve stimuli from the muscular system but also minimizes the voltage of the differential bioenergy, positive (*prana*) as well as negative (*apana*), to both the terminals of the nervous system

Moreover, the overall bioenergy principle (*mukhya prana*) and the motivating stuff of *citta* or consciousness being held back in abeyance through partial abstraction naturally provide for the most favourable circumstance suited to ideal relaxation The yoga technique, thus, goes many steps further than the latest developments in the teaching of relaxation with the aid of psychophonic records (Radwan) and the relaxation therapy (Jacobson)

(b) *Twofold Relaxation* It is significant that scientific Yoga was the first to recognize the fact that relaxation is a physiologic essential which serves as a short vacation, as it were, between two activities, also that it is multiple, and further that, through the habituation to general relaxation, even the need for sleep may be reduced to the minimum.

For the purpose of this text, however, a mere reference to the twofold physical relaxation is sufficient For example, when the relaxation is applied voluntarily either to the skeleton muscles or to certain parts of the body only, it may be termed local relaxation But when either the deep muscles simultaneously get so affected as to reduce their contractions to the minimum or the whole body is relaxed completely — by stages or at once — such technique may be termed general or deep relaxation





Fig 19

MAKARASANA OR THE CROCODILE-POSE FOR RELAXATION. IT OFFERS RELIEF TO THE SPINE AND NECESSARY PRESSURE TO THE SAGGING INTERNAL ORGANS.

## MAKARASANA

As a matter of fact, a great many people do not know just exactly how to relax for the simple reason that they are often stiff and over-attentive to the idea of relaxation. The best cure lies in forgetting the objective and, if possible, even the very presence of the body by gradually withdrawing conscious attention from every part.

(c) *Makarasana* Assume *makarasana* or the crocodile-pose by lying prostrate with the chest, the abdomen and the front of the body in contact with the ground—the legs separated, stretched at full length and partly separated, the arms folded and the head resting thereon. See FIG 19. Suited to the local relaxation, it is best to begin by letting down all your weight on whatever you are resting of course, the floor. First, direct your attention to the lower parts of your body, viz, the toes, then the calves and the thighs, etc., and dissociate all physical and mental feeling of awareness from these parts, gradually rising upwards until finally the physical consciousness of all the various parts of the body, as it were, fades away from vision and feeling. Close the eyes and remain motionless as long as desired.

Avoid numbness creeping in due to an undue pressure upon any one part of the body under prolonged immobility. Breathing should be slow, normal and rhythmic. This relaxing posture may be tried for ten to fifteen minutes usually in the mid day or evening when the need for physical respite is generally felt.

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

(d) *Savasana* For comprehensive general or deep relaxation, however, *savasana* or the corpse-pose should be followed. The technique consists in simply lying supine with the face towards the sky and the arms and the legs passively rested at full length at their respective sides. Keep motionless like a corpse. See FIG 20. After relaxing all tension of the skeleton muscles, when physical immobility is secured, gradually re-relax, as it were, every muscle of the body by paying attention to each one separately, from the tip of the toe to the top of the skull, through the most complete resignation of the will. Close the eyes, as if in peaceful slumber, and (in the beginning) keep the mind fixed on the movements of the in-coming and out-going breath till at last the mind synchronizes and merges in the absolute nothingness

The yoga authorities suggest that whenever fatigue is experienced during the practice of Yoga (or during other conditions of physical and mental strain), the above technique of corpse-pose may be resorted to immediately as a factor of safety both to relieve physical strain and to quiet the mind. There is, therefore, no limit to its frequency or to the length of its practice which should be governed by individual requirement. Breathing, as in all static yoga postures, should be slow, rhythmic and natural

[From the yoga point of view, relaxation eases muscular and nervous tension, abstracts the senses from their objects, calms passion, quiets the mind, makes silence and concentration easy, and, thus, contributes greatly to equity and

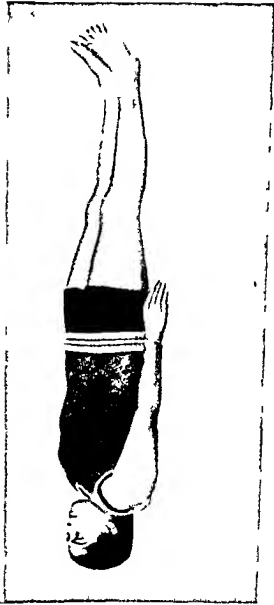


FIG 20

SAVASANA OR THE CORPSE POSE MOST SUITED TO GENERAL RFLAXATION OR SHORT PERIODS OF REST AFTER ANY PHYSICAL EXERTION

## SAVASANA

peace of mind It is also held by the authorities that during relaxation—more than any other condition of the body—an entry into the subconscious planes is most readily achieved than during other phases of consciousness. Moreover, the natural harmony which exists between the body and the mind could only be agreeably revived and sustained, in a very great measure, through prolonged deep relaxation

(e) *Relaxation for Beauty* Right here it may be observed that, it has not yet been sufficiently realized by the modern dames that the time devoted to cosmetics and beauty-parlours could be profitably utilized in the constructive process of beauty through the practice of relaxation. What is beauty? It is not only the good looks and the figure, on the contrary, it is really the personality represented by poise, freshness, vigour, perfect symmetry, good health and harmony of both the body and the mind—the beauty of soul being divinity

It is a matter of common experience that it is impossible to acquire any one of the above characteristics with distracted mind, confused feelings and physical indispositions. For this, both the body and the mind need regalanization which is possible only through ideal means of relaxation. Any amount of external paraphernalia cannot possibly replace even a fraction of such intrinsic beauty for the simple reason that real beauty shines like lustre and is felt through its virtues of radiance, warmth and harmony of good health which are not merely skin deep and, further, which require

## YOGA EXERCISES FOR THE SPINE

no accessories In effect, according to the spirit of Yoga, beauty products are a waste if anything for what really heightens beauty and grace is the perfect health and purity of the body, mind and soul All data so far available indicate in no uncertain terms that conscious relaxation, when mastered and followed regularly between intervals of work, has tremendous possibilities as one of the most valuable assets to beauty, good health and longevity

### CONCLUSION

9 Whatever the objective, it is wrong to suppose that without proper care of the body good health could be maintained or that profound experiences in higher life are possible even without good health Scientific Yoga, therefore, wisely regards both good health and longevity as the essential fruits of physical education which alone provide for the enabling circumstances that transform the sporadic subliminal experiences into the mature and habitual realization of Self

As the first step, these yoga posture-exercises supply woman with a safe and rational system of physical education which proposes through positive and sedate good health to lay the real foundation for the attainment of the sublime heights of ideal womanhood, and this, in no sense, through an obscure process of mysticism but through the analytical precision of an exact science

## GUIDETABLE

THIS guidetable is wholly recommendatory and provides full scope for such modifications as the varying needs of an individual may specify. The sequence is based upon the advisability both of easy to hard movements and of the alternate use of the opposite sets of muscles. The breathing is harmonized to the maximum respiratory reactions, and the rounds and time apportioned to yield utmost hygienic benefit inherent in each posture. The limitations indicate such physical conditions as are likely to preclude that exercise.

When practised with precision and regularity, the hygienic results of these exercises are sure to become manifest in a few months. This, in turn, would inspire the essential faith and enthusiasm for their continued practice throughout the lifetime.

As such this daily course of yoga physical exercises has been founded strictly upon the average need of an individual. For those students of Yoga who desire specific training in yoga physical culture, however, it is advisable that they should have their individual courses charted out for them after a personal examination by and in consultation with the authorized teacher of Yoga. It hardly needs to be pointed out that the ultimate success in Yoga depends largely upon the right selection of such a Yoga teacher.

# GUIDETABLE

SEQ	YOGA POSTURE	FREQUENCY	TIME	LIMITATIONS
1	Prarthanasana	static	½ mnt	nil
2	Ekapadasana	"	" "	"
3	Padmasana	"	1 "	advanced pregnancy
4	Yastikasana	5 rounds	" "	"
5	Parvatasana	10 "	2 mnts	"
6	Trikonasana I	5 "	1 mnt	"
7	" II	10 "	2 mnts	"
8	Garudasana	3 altr.	" "	"
9	Hastapadangustasana I	" "	1 mnt	"
10	" II	" "	" "	"
11	Hastapadasana I	6 rounds	" "	"
12	" II	static	" "	"
13	Matsyasana	5 rounds	" "	"
14	Paryankasana	static	" "	"
15	Ardha-sarvangasana	"	2 mnts.	"
16	Viparitakarani	"	" "	"
17	Bhujangasana	5 rounds	1 mnt	"
18	Halasana	6 "	" "	"
19	Ustrasana	5 "	" "	"
20	Makarasana	static	2 mnts.	"
21	Savasana	"	5 "	nil
21 POSTURES			30 MNTS.	



## GLOSSARY

### A

- Activism**, *n* the condition or process of rendering, or of being, active
- Aesthetic**, *adj* pertaining to the beautiful or delicate
- Amazon**, *n* a fair sex athlete or warrior
- Anatomic**, *adj* concerning the structure of the body
- Antero-internal**, *adj* situated in front and on the inner side thereof
- APANA**, *n* [Y] the negative counterpart of bionergy, the negative impulse, one of the vital forces
- Apices pulmonis**, *n* the upper extremities of the lungs
- ARDHA-PADMASANA** *n* [Y] the semi-lotus pose, the cross-legged position in sitting
- ARDHA-SARVANGASANA** *n* [Y] the semi-reverse pose, a variety of head-low hips-high posture
- Arteriosclerosis**, *n* the harden-

ing of the arteries, popularly called high blood pressure

**ASANA**, *n* a seat, a posture, [Y] any fixed position of the body, the system of physical education associated with Hathayoga, the third accessory of Yoga

**Athletics**, *n* any system of vigorous or competitive gymnastics

### B

**BHUVANGASANA**, *n* [Y] the snake-pose with the neck and the head imitating the hood of a cobra

**Bifurcation**, *n* division into two branches

**Biology**, *n* the science which deals with the phenomena of life in general

**Biostatistical** *adj* pertaining to vital statistics

### C

**Caliber**, *n* the diameter of a canal or tube

# GLOSSARY

**Cartilage**, *n* the soft elastic bone-like substance

pension of breath after an exhalation

**CITTA**, *n* the mind, [Y] the stuff from which the mind is made, that particular consciousness which remains identified with personality or individual potencies

## F

**Foramen**, *n* a hole in a bone

## G

**GARUDASANA**, *n* [Y] the eagle-pose

## D

**Defunction**, *n* impairment or loss of function.

**Genetic**, *adj* pertaining to reproduction or heredity

**Dynamic**, *adj* active, manifesting force or action

**GHATASYA**, *n* [Y] physical, physiological

## E

**EKAPADASANA**, *n* [Y] the one-leg pose in standing

**Globule**, *n* a very small mass

**Glycosuria**, *n* the presence of sugar in natural urine

**Enteroptosis**, *n* the downward displacement of the abdominal viscera

## H

**Habituation**, *n* habit confirmed as a second nature

**Equilibration**, *n*, maintenance or restoration of normal equilibrium

**HALASANA**, *n*, [Y] the plough-pose

**Eroticism**, *n* a morbid sexual instinct or desire

**HASTAPADANGUSTASANA**, *n* [Y] the toe-finger pose

**Exhibitionism**, *n* the urge for, or an act of, display

**HASTAPADASANA**, *n* [Y] the hand-leg pose

**Experimentum crucis**, [L.] the personal, critical, or decisive, experiment.

**HATHAYOGA**, *n* [Y] the system of Yoga directed to the health of the body for promoting health of the mind and soul.

**Expiratory standstill**, *n* the sus-

# GLOSSARY

**Hybridistic**, *adj* variable in characteristics of sex or species

## I

**Immunity**, *n* the power which secures the individual against infection or disease

**Inspiratory standstill** *n* the retention of breath after an inspiration

**Insomnia**, *n* sleeplessness

**Inter alia**, [L.] among other things

**Interstitial**, *adj* pertaining to, or situated in, the interspaces of a tissue

## J

**JNANA**, *n* real knowledge

## K

**KUNDALINI**, *n* [Y] the bio-energy potential

**KUSA**, *n* a variety of grass used in India for religious purposes

## M

**MAKARASANA**, *n* [Y] the crocodile-pose

**MATSYASANA**, *n* [Y] the fish-pose

**Mesentery**, *n* the fold of the peritoneum

**Metaphysical** *adj* pertaining to what is beyond the physical, mental, psychic

**Mortality**, *n* the death rate

**Motility**, *n* the power of spontaneous response

**MRNALAKOMALA VAPU**, *n* [Y] a lissom body tender as the inside of a lotus stalk

**MUKHYA PRANA**, *n* [Y] the overall bioenergy principle

**MUDRA**, *n* [Y] any one of the neuromuscular controls, in yoga physical education

## N

**NADISUDDHI** *n* [Y] the purification of the nervous system

**Nephritis**, *n* inflammation of the kidneys

**Nervimotion**, *n* motion effected through the agency of nerves

**Neurasthenia** *n* nervous prostration

**Neuromuscular**, *adj* pertaining to nerves and muscles

## O

**Obsolete** *adj* gone out of date antiquated

## GLOSSARY

**Occiput**, *n* the back part of the head.

**Omentum**, *n* a duplication of the peritoneum.

**Ossify**, *v t* to convert into bone, harden

### P

**PADMASANA**, *n*. [Y] the lotus-pose

**Paradox**, *n* something apparently absurd or incredible, yet true

**PARVATASANA**, *n* [Y] the mountain-pose

**PARYANKASANA**, *n* [Y] the hams-pose

**PASCIMOTTANASANA**, *n* [Y] the posterior stretching-pose

**Pathogenetic**, *adj* giving origin to disease or morbid symptoms

**Per se**, [L.] by itself considered.

**Physiopsychic**, *adj* pertaining, or relating, to both the body and the mind.

**PRANA**, *n*. [Y] bioenergy, life force

**PRARTHANASANA**, *n*. [Y] the prayer-pose

**Prostration**, *n* extreme exhaus-

tion, powerlessness

**Psychic**, *adj* pertaining to, or connected with, consciousness or soul.

**Psychosis**, *n* that thought condition which disturbs the equilibrium of the normal psyche

### S

**Sacrum**, *n* the triangular bone situated at the end of the spinal column.

**Sadistic**, *adj* pertaining to the vulgar in animality, diabolic

**SAMATVAM**, *n*. [Y] mental equity

**SARVANGASANA**, *n* [Y] the reverse pose of the hips-high variety

**SAVASANA**, *n* [Y] the corpse-pose

**Sedate**, *adj* conducive to peace and composure quieting to the nervous system.

**Self-effacement**, *n* self-sacrifice

**SODASABDAVAYO**, *adj* as youthful as at the age of sixteen

**Spiritual stamina** *n* soul force, the inner strength derived from the knowledge, or experience, of Reality

# GLOSSARY

Static, *adj.* fixed; steady; at rest; not in motion.

Sternum, *n.* the breast bone.

STHITA, *adj.* in standing.

Sublimation, *n.* in Yoga, the deflection of thought, energy and action from the ignoble to the noble purposes of life.

Sylphlike, *adj.* like a fairy.

## T

TALASANA, *n.* [Y.] the palmae-pose.

TRIKONASANA, *n.* [Y.] the triangle-pose.

## U

Underoxidation, *n.* lack or inefficient utility of, or combination with, oxygen.

USTRASANA, *n.* [Y.] the camel-pose.

## V

VAPUH KRSATVAM VADANE PRASANNATA, *n.* [Y.] a slender body with the radiant face; one of the positive symptoms of yoga health

Vasomotoricity, *n.* the power of producing changes in the caliber of the blood vessels.

Vice versa, [L.] the terms being exchanged.

VIPARITAKARANI, *n.* [Y.] the neuromuscular process for retrofusion.

Viscera, *n.* the large interior organs.

Vital index; *n.* the hygienic ratio; the index of metabolic compensation, the ratio of body-weight to breathing capacity.

## Y

YASTIKASANA, *n.* [Y.] the stick-pose.

YOGA, *n.* one of the six main Systems of Indian Philosophy; the art and science of Self-realization; the practical culture for health of the body, mind and soul; the ultimate achievement of life.

YOGA, *adj.* of, pertaining to, advocated by, or derived from, Yoga

YOGACARA, *n.* [Y.] behaviour conforming to the dignity of Yoga.

YOGANIDRA, *n.* [Y.] that condition of rest which is characterized by half sleep and half abstraction

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